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FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 2, 1892.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["LOOK!" SAID MISS GERT, SUDDENLY, AS HER QUICK EYES RECOGNIZED JACK TREMAINET.]

A PRETTY COMEDY.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

SOMEONE said somewhere that London was divided into three parts—Belgravia, Bohemia, and Mesopotamia. He might have said truly that the inhabitants of the great city were represented by three great divisions—happiness, misery, and dulness.

These three heads embrace everyone far more fully than such vague terms as riches and poverty, work and leisure, for there must always be a crowd of folks who come in the between stage, and are neither rich nor poor; while some of the denizens of fashion work quite as hard, after their manner, in their pursuit of pleasure, as the toiler for his daily bread.

But happiness, misery and dulness take in the whole world, and the last class inflicts

pretty considerable suffering on its victims; at least, such was the opinion of Violet Ward, the heroine of this story, who had perhaps never known a real crushing trouble in her life, but yet was always groaning under the burden of petty ones from which there was no escape or refuge.

Not that she "groaned" literally—she was the best tempered girl in Harley street—only at nineteen she found a great many things in her daily life she would like to have altered, and longed for a great many others she could not have.

Mr. and Mrs. Ward were not what is called "poor." They were, indeed, very well satisfied with their income, which had steadily increased since the day they were brave enough to risk matrimony on a pound a week.

They owed nothing. Mrs. Ward made it a point to pay for everything when she had it, which was decidedly more inconvenient than the time-honoured custom of weekly bills, and she always bought the best of its kind, saying it was cheapest in the end.

Her house was conspicuous, even in such a genteel locality as Hartley-street, for the

dazzling brightness of its windows and the spotless purity of its white blinds.

Her servant had been with her ten years, which spoke volumes for her in the eyes of her neighbours.

Her husband, like the blackbird in the popular comic song "always came home to tea," but still an unprejudiced stranger entering No. 19 for the first time might have been forgiven a little shiver, and certainly would have given a sigh of relief when clear of the house, for there was something depressing even in the amount of care bestowed upon it.

As it happened, however, strangers never did enter No. 19 for Mrs. Ward thought visiting a useless expense. She had been an only child herself. Her husband had no brother, and his one sister was married to a colonist, so there were no near relations to make the thrifty housewife relax her rule.

She had her pride, too, and would never suffer her girls to accept such hospitality as they did not return. So that though both Martha and Violet had been to school none of the companions they met there had become their friends, and the two girls had never

taken a meal in any house but their own since as small children they first came to reside in the aristocratic suburb of Denmark-hill.

Where they had lived before was not known, but rumour said Rotherhithe. Mrs. Ward was not fond of alluding to her earlier days. The head of the family was engaged "in the city," but in what capacity no one could ever discover. He was "in an office" Violet, as a small child, confessed; but what position he occupied there, whereabouts in the wide gulf between proprietor and errand boy his sphere came, no one knew.

His habits were so methodical he might have served as a clock to his neighbours. Every morning he went up by omnibus from "the Green" a little before nine, and every night he returned by the same conveyance at half-past six, Saturdays at three.

He observed Bank holidays by devoting his care to the back garden, where flourished, or tried to, some attenuated cabbages, and in the summer he took a fortnight at home and enjoyed long walks with his daughters.

Not one of the four who made up this suburban family had slept a night away from Hartley-street since they came there, not one of them had ever been invited to do so; which proves two things—that their lives were very dull, and that they had no friends who desired their company.

They went to church on Sundays, and had cold dinner, the day being perhaps the longest of the week to Violet. Mr. Ward slept all the afternoon, and his wife and eldest daughter read "good books," an occupation poor Violet found intensely depressing.

It was the old story of the duck's egg in the hen's nest. The second Miss Ward was a continual source of amazement to her mother, who could not understand having a daughter so different from herself, while even plain, honest-hearted John Ward began to think there must be something in the complaints that were always reaching him from his wife and Martha, and that it was only his foolish fondness that made him consider his youngest-hera a "dear good girl."

It was an April day, the trees on Champion-hill were just budding into green, the sky had a summer's blue, the air was soft and balmy, the birds sang as though they knew spring was come, and Violet Ward stood in her bedroom in front of the small square hanging looking-glass, which was all Mrs. Ward thought necessary for her daughter's vanity, taking a calm, frank survey of herself.

"If only I were pretty," thought the poor child, with a sob in her voice which was almost touching. "If only I were pretty I should go out into the world and make friends; but I am only a little ugly white thing, and there is nothing for it but to stay on here where it gets duller and duller every day. I wonder if other girls are as wretched as I am? Martha says I am wicked, and that I ought to be thankful for good food and clothes. I suppose it would be bad to go hungry, but I sometimes think I would like to eat less and have a little money. Some money of my very own would be delightful."

She was nineteen turned, but her mother, being impressed with a wholesome dread of Violet's extravagance, still kept her without an allowance, providing all her clothes herself.

Violet could not say her mother had ever refused her a shilling if she asked for it, but Mrs. Ward required to know exactly what the money was wanted for, and somehow that took the charm off the gift.

Violet could not go and tell her mother she wanted a novel from the circulating library or a tin of Aspinall's enamel to brighten up her bedroom. Mrs. Ward would have declared all novels were poison, and that the bedroom already possessed all that was necessary.

Did it? It was a small room opening on to a narrow landing half way upstairs and built over the kitchen. In earlier years, it had been a kind of nursery and workroom,

but, as Violet grew up, Martha complained so much of her shiftless ways that the sisters had been separated, and the younger established in an independent abode.

It had one advantage, being built a long way out it looked straight into the garden, and did not command a view of the kitchen, which, indeed, was underneath, but that was the only thing one could say in its praise. It had no fireplace, and was only large enough to hold a bed, toilet necessities, a chair, and a kind of home-made wardrobe formed of a recess screened from view by the most hideous creton curtain ever fabricated. It was a very good quality and would last for years, so Mrs. Ward had bought the remnant, quite forgetting that the impossible pink roses and green ferns of the brightest hue would clash terribly with the wall-paper, which was a cheap arrangement in blue and orange.

Violet had an eye for harmony, and the colours which surrounded her offended it at every turn; but appeal was useless, and even when a strip of scarlet and black felt druggot was added to her "plishings" she could only bear it.

She was as much a contrast to her mother and sister in appearance as other things. Mrs. Ward was a tall, stout, handsome woman, with a high colour and dark hair. Martha was following in her steps, even as regarded the stoutness, but Violet was a little scrap of a creature, with thin white face and reddish-brown hair. Her eyes were light hazel, her forehead broad and low, her hands small and thin.

Mrs. Ward declared once she looked half starved, and that she was a poor creature who would never be a credit to the family. But this was spoken in a moment of anger, for there was nothing sickly or repulsive about Violet. Though looking very small beside her mother and sister she was yet five feet two in height, and her figure was perfectly proportioned. She was not pretty because her face lacked animation; but her features examined separately were good, and had she only been dressed becomingly, the pallor of her complexion would not have been so starting.

Mrs. Ward, however, was far too thrifty to invest in colours likely to fade or soil easily. She chose good materials in shades that would "last" and not show the dirt.

Violet's winter dress had been a shabby-coloured meringue, which her very soul hated, and which was about as trying a tint to her hair and complexion as could have been imagined.

The window was open, a sickly-looking musk plant was on the ledge, Violet had put it out that it might enjoy the sunshine. It came into her head, as she watched it, that she should uncommonly enjoy a little sunshine herself; everything about her was grey, just a taste of sunshine would be so nice.

"It's not that we are poorer than other people," reflected Violet, as she sat and pondered, "but we are so much more careful. Mother and Martha are so anxious everything should last a long time, and so determined we shall never waste anything, that they have no time to think of enjoying themselves. Mother says she is careful now that we may not be reduced to want when father gets old; but he is not a bit old, and if we could only have a little pleasure first!"

"I don't believe the Greys are a bit richer than we are, but they have a much better time. Mrs. Grey only has a little servant at half a crown a week, and mother pays Jane fourteen pounds a year, but then the girls go to the Crystal Palace every few months, and they have people to tea—they asked me once. I only wish mother would have let me go; I know I should like Mrs. Grey, she has such a sweet face."

Mr. Grey was a private tutor, visiting pupils and receiving them at home. He had nine children instead of two, and his earnings could not have been very large. His house was opposite the Ward's on the unfashionable

side of Hartley Street, whose back sloped down to the railway line, so no doubt his rent was cheaper, and yet, as Violet said, the Grey girls contrived to get a great deal more pleasure out of their lives than she did.

"I'm just going to get tea, Miss Violet," said Jane, putting her head in as she passed the door on her way downstairs. "I shall not ring the bell for fear of waking your Pa."

"All right, Jane."

There was a good-sized bow windowed drawing-room which was never used; beneath it was a really handsome dining-room, sleek given over to repose; at the back of this was a small apartment where Mrs. Ward and the girls always sat and where meals also were eaten.

Mr. Ward's Sunday nap was never disturbed as he took it in the privacy of his own den, a tiny slip where he kept his business papers and wrote letters. He must have been very cold in winter, as it had no fireplace; but he made no complaint, being well imbued with his wife's thrifty spirit, and also of a hardy constitution.

The parlour, so it was always called, was occupied by Mrs. Ward and Martha when Violet appeared. The former was making the tea, while Martha cut some bread and butter; this was the usual routine on Sundays. The tea was of the best, the butter fresh from a dairy, and the bread home-made, for Mrs. Ward believed in living good. Everything on the table was the best of its kind.

"My dear Violet," said her mother, "what have you been doing with yourself all the afternoon?"

"Thinking," replied Violet, slowly. "Shall I tell papa tea's ready?"

"No, he is sure to come soon. I wish you would not waste your time so, Violet."

"I thought Sunday was a day of rest."

"Yes, my dear, for those who work during the week. But it seems to me you never do anything."

"There is nothing to do."

"Oh, Violet!" cried her sister in a shocked tone, "when you know mother wants a new set of crochet antimacassars for the drawing-room."

"I did think you liked fancy work," said Mrs. Ward, in an aggrieved tone; "but the fact is, Violet, you are incorrigibly idle."

"No one uses crochet antimacassars now," replied Violet, "and if they did, no one would see them in our drawing-room. It would take me weeks to copy those patterns, and my work would be hideous when I had finished. Mother could buy the same thing with taped borders at the drapers for twopence half penny."

"But they would not last."

"That would not matter for we never use the drawing-room. I don't believe we have ever spent one evening there in our lives."

"You are the most tiresome girl I ever met," said her mother, crossly. "Where do you expect to go to?"

"Nowhere," replied Violet, sadly, "we never do go anywhere."

"What's that!" cried a hearty voice in the doorway, "Never go anywhere, V! what do you mean?"

"It's quite true, papa," said Violet, as she rose and placed a chair for him. "I've not been out of Denmark-hill for ages. I'm sick of the sight of everything."

"You talk like a foolish child," said Martha; "there are some very pleasant walks about here."

"Only one gets so tired of them."

Did Mr. Ward sympathise with the rebel? Was his foolish fondness for the youngest still conquering his sense of duty, or did he really feel a headache, which ailment he pleaded as an excuse for not going to church?

"But you need not stay at home on my account, my dear," he told his wife. "If you and Martha go to St. Matthew's as usual, this idle child can keep me company."

"You are sure you don't want me?" asked

Mrs. Ward, who was a most devoted wife. "I will stay if you like."

"No, my dear; Violet can manage to keep the fire in, which is all I shall want. Between us we can keep off burglars, eh, Vi?"

So Jane, the faithful, went to chapel, and the two Marthas started for church, while Violet drew a low chair near her father's and told him she hoped he would soon be better.

"Tut, tut, my dear, a headache's no great misfortune, but I had a mind to stay at home with you to keep me company."

"I am so pleased to stay!"

He laid his hand on hers tenderly, he might be a common-place, plain-spoken "city man," but he came nearer to understanding the spring-flower than her mother.

"Now, my dear, what's the matter? Speak plainly, Vi, and let me make it out if I can. It seems to me you're not happy, child, and yet I want you to be, and your mother tells me you have every comfort."

"I suppose I'm very wicked," said Violet, simply; "but I want something to do. I want to see the world, and have a little amusement while I am young."

"Martha didn't, and she was nineteen once."

"But Martha isn't me. Oh, papa, I can't explain it better; but I am tired of everything!"

"Softly, softly, Vi, don't complain of what you have, but tell me what you want, that's best; put a thing into plain words, child. You don't expect to be presented at Court, and go to balls and parties every night like an earl's daughter, I suppose?"

"Oh dear, no," and Vi laughed heartily. "I should be quite contented with life like the Greys."

Mr. Ward opened his eyes.

"My dear child, the Greys don't spend half as much on their girls as we do on you. How can they when they have nine children to provide for, and no fixed income? He works hard enough, poor fellow; but he can never tell from one quarter to another what his earnings will be."

"Oh, you don't understand," cried Vi, almost petulantly. "I dare say the Greys have to work hard at home, in fact I know one of the girls looks after the children, and the other does all the needlework; but they have treats too, sometimes. They go to the Crystal Palace or the theatre now and then. They have people to tea, and may make friends. They don't live at one dull level like we do. You are out all day, papa, so you can't understand but from the time the trades-people have done coming in the morning there's not a creature goes through the gate; we might just as well not have a front door, for it's never used. No one touches our knocker but the postman. Except for meals, one wouldn't know whether it was morning or afternoon. Mother and Martha do needlework from morning to night, and they seem quite contented too, but it stifles me."

"You were happier when you were at school, eh?" said Mr. Ward, kindly.

"Yes, because I had something to do. I didn't feel the dullness so much then. I believe I used to be the only girl in the whole school who was sorry when the holidays came; and now—why, papa, breakfast is over at half-past eight, and I feel perfectly miserable as I see Jane clear away, and remember I've five mortal hours to get through somehow."

"You might read," suggested her father. "I've read every book in the house a dozen times over. I wanted mother to take in some magazine, but she said it was waste of money. I wanted to join a working society, but she declared while I didn't care to work for the house I mustn't waste my time by making clothes for poor people."

John Ward sighed; perhaps he understood Violet better than his wife could do, because he felt that his Martha, admirable house-keeper and good woman that she was, yet lacked something his sister had had.

"Do you wonder where you got your name, child?" asked the city man, suddenly. "Have you ever thought it strange your mother chose such a fanciful one?"

"Mother said once you wished it."

"Ay. You see, Violet, I had a little sister once, who was just the apple of my eye, and her name was Violet; so when you were born I made up my mind you should be called after your aunt; and the strangest part of it is that you've grown up as much like her as though you were her own child."

"Did she die?" asked Violet, suddenly.

"Why have we never heard of her before?"

"I hope and trust she is alive, child; but it's many a long year since I heard of her. I never speak of her, because your mother don't like thinking of the days when we were poor; and when Violet lived with us we were very poor indeed."

The younger Violet started.

"Did mother like her?" she asked, quietly.

"Your mother is a good woman," replied John Ward, loyally; "but she has her fancies. She thought Violet listless and a dreamer. My sister was a mild teacher, and lived with us because our small incomes went further united. Things didn't always go smoothly, and at last, just after Martha was born, a very rich man—or he seemed so to us then—wanted to marry your aunt. He was a good-hearted fellow, but he hadn't the education or manners of a gentleman. He could have helped me on a lot in the world; and I won't deny, child, I hoped my sister would accept him."

"But she didn't, and so mother sent her away," cried Violet, intensely interested in her namesake's story.

"Not quite right, Vi. Your aunt refused Mr. Massey, and your mother was dreadfully put out; there was a dreadful quarrel, and I had to speak to my sister, and say we must settle our horses apart. But she told me she was engaged to young Tremaine, and that as soon as he got the appointment he was trying for they'd be married. As luck would have it he got it within a week; and your mother, who was never unreasonable, agreed to Violet's staying with us till her wedding, and helped her to get her things ready into the bargain."

"And they went abroad?"

"Yes, my dear. They sailed for Africa when Martha was three months old, and they've been there ever since. Mr. Tremaine went out as an accountant to a large firm. He had good salary, and all looked hopeful; but he lost his health, and had to give up work. Violet's letters grew few and far between. I sent her what I could, but it wasn't much, for your mother said charity began at home; perhaps Violet thought I might have done more. I can't say; but, any way, now I haven't heard of her for more than twenty years."

"And she has been gone twenty-six years," said Violet, with a most accurate recollection of her sister's age. "I wonder if she has any children?"

"She had three when I heard of her last. One good turn I did the poor girl. I met Edward Massey, and told him how bad things were with her. He was a rich man, and the son of generosity. I guessed he would send her help, and anonymously, so that she might not mind taking it; but I never heard any more."

"I wonder they did not come home."

"My dear Vi, a family of five can't get from Africa to England under a heavy sum; and they had no prospects here. Besides, child, when people are 'down,' it's always easier to stay where they are. It's not so difficult just to rub on from day to day, but a journey needs ready money."

And as Mr. Ward delivered himself of this statement, a wonderful thing happened, which had never occurred before on a Sunday evening within Violet's memory; there came a loud double knock at the front door.

Father and daughter looked at each other.

"It's some one for next door," was his prompt suggestion; "that German family

have heaps of company, and Sunday is their favourite day."

Mr. Ward was going to answer the summons, but Violet slipped past him, and was in the hall before he had well quitted his easy-chair.

"If you want the Brinkmanns, they live next door, the first door to the right," she began, before the stranger could speak a word.

He was a tall, well-made man, with a light overcoat, and a look of "strangeness" about him which convinced Violet this was his first visit to Denmark-hill.

"But I don't want the Brinkmanns," he answered, courteously, taking his hat. "Does not Mr. Ward live here, I was told this was his address?"

Violet started. No visitor had ever called to see her father on Sunday. The mysterious firm in the city, who absorbed his services for six days, dispensed with them on the Sabbath; and of masculine friends John Ward had none; besides this was a young man.

Violet really thought he was the first of the species who had ever had the trouble of calling at 19, Hartley-street.

"My father is at home," she answered, rather awkwardly. "Please come in."

"Then you must be my cousin," the young man replied, pleasantly. "Let me introduce myself as Jack Tremaine."

CHAPTER II.

THERE was no want of warmth in John Ward's welcome. He wrung his nephew's hand, and told him he was delighted to see him.

He would fain have made a raid on the larder, and brought in everything he could find to eat, but Jack assured him he had dined just before starting.

He had been in England nearly a week, and was staying at the Charing Cross Hotel.

"In London nearly a week without coming near us," cried Mr. Ward, reproachfully; "that's too bad of you. You should have come straight here."

But, even as he spoke, the worthy man remembered his wife and the probability she would have disapproved of this arrangement.

"My mother wanted to write," explained Jack, simply, "and tell you I was coming over, but you see, we had no idea of your address. The last letters she sent to Rotherhithe were returned to her, and we could not tell where you were living; so I promised to study a directory, and see if I could not find you out."

"These must have been dozens of John Wards in the Directory," said Violet, quickly.

"However did you find out which was father?"

Young Tremaine smiled.

"Have you never heard your father's second name? It is singular enough to make it easy to distinguish him from a dozen other John Wards."

The master of No. 19, Hartley-street smiled.

"We dropped that when we left Rotherhithe. My wife tries to forget that I was ever christened anything but John. I took care it was put right in the Directory, though, when we first came here; I seemed to guess Violet would come home some day."

"But what is it?" asked the younger Violet, curiously. "Oh, please, don't say it's Ebenezer!"

"It is Friday," answered Jack, with a smile; "and my grandfather was called so too. It seems to have been a custom among the Wards."

Violet, for once, felt in perfect sympathy with her mother. She decided it had been very wise to drop the "Friday." Why, her father might as well have been called "Crusoe" at once.

"And how is my sister?" asked John Ward, huskily. "Don't tell me she is dead!"

"She was never better in her life, but," and the young man's voice grew grave, "she has been a widow for ten long years."

"Have you any brothers or sisters?" demanded Violet, curiously.

"Two sisters. They are both much younger than myself. I am getting on for twenty-six."

"And what made you come to England?" asked John Ward. "Can I be of use to you, my boy? I have no sons of my own, and the firm are very favourably disposed towards me. I don't think they would refuse a clerkship to my nephew."

The colonist shook his head.

"You mustn't think me ungrateful if I decline your offer. I have led a free, outdoor life ever since I can remember, and I am sure I should never get on in an office. Besides, I am not my own master; I came over here on business for a friend."

"What kind of business? Anything I can help you in?"

"It was only to make some inquiries as to certain relations my friends had lost sight of for some years," returned Jack, coolly. "All my expenses are to be paid, and I came over as companion and secretary to Mr. Dermot, one of our statesmen. I'm staying with the Dermots now, that's why I said my time was not my own."

"And your mother and sisters," said John Ward, anxiously. "I hope they are provided with a home during your absence?"

"I made the best arrangements I could for them. My mother was most anxious I should come. She said a sight of old England would be the making of me. If I see my way clear to make a happy home for her here I shall persuade the mother to come over, and not go back to Africa at all."

John Ward shook his head.

"I don't want to discourage you, my boy, but every trade and profession here is overstocked, and living's dearer than it was twenty years ago. Besides, your mother would find poverty harder to bear here than in the colony."

"You are very good to have taken me on trust," said the young man, warmly; "but I really can prove my identity. I have a letter from my mother which she charged me to give you when I found you."

It was a very short letter, but the handwriting carried John Ward back across the gulf of nearly thirty years to the days when he and his little sister had been all the world to each other.

Mrs. Tremaine simply recommended her boy to her brother's care.

"Jack may only be six months in England, or he may settle in the old country for life; but whether his visit be short or long I want you to know and love him. I can trust Alan Dermot to be all kindness to my boy; but I want Jack to know his mother's family. If Martha has forgiven me she will welcome him for my sake."

Jack Tremaine seemed to read Mrs. Ward by instinct. When she and Martha returned he explained his position far more definitely than he had done to his uncle and Violet.

The inquiries he was commissioned to make would take from three to six months, and during that period all his expenses would be franked.

Mr. and Mrs. Dermot wished him to remain with them, but he thought he should be free to pursue his quest in apartments. He made it perfectly clear to the astute matron that, whether his prospects were good or bad in the future, in the present he had no pecuniary anxiety, and needed nothing of his English relations but goodwill and kindness.

He declined to stay for supper, but promised to come down the following day in time for the seven o'clock tea, which was the family evening meal.

"How unfortunate you had a headache, John," said Mrs. Ward, sympathetically, when Jack had departed; "all this talking must have made it worse."

John had quite forgotten the excuse on which he had remained away from church;

but it flashed back on him in time to prevent his making any awkward disclaimer.

"What do you think of him, Patty?" the old name coming from his softened mood. It was years now since he had called his wife anything but Martha.

"He's well enough," said Mrs. Ward, amiably, "but I hope he'll give up the idea of bringing his mother and sisters over to England—it's absurd!"

"Oh, mother! it would be delightful to have an aunt and cousins," cried Violet, excitedly.

"It wouldn't be delightful having to keep them," said Mrs. Ward, tartly; "and that's what it would come to. Girls brought up in a remote colony would never earn a living in England, and Jack won't get a salary big enough to keep four people!"

"He doesn't seem poor," objected Martha.

"No, because all his expenses are paid. This trip to England is just a pleasant holiday, and if he stayed on by himself I daresay he'd manage to get along; but weighed down by a mother and sisters he never would."

But on the whole she took the stranger's arrival very amiably, and she said of her own accord to her husband when they were alone,—

"I expect Violet misses her boy sorely. I think I shall write and tell her how pleased we are with him."

"I wish you would. He's a nice young fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes; and he's just the age our Tom would have been if he'd lived."

Mr. Ward seized on the moment when she seemed in a softened mood to say a word for Violet.

"We have two children left, Patty. They are good girls, and dear girls, though Vi may seem a little self-willed; but she'll come right in the end. The child's plenty of sense."

"Then I wish she'd show a little of it," said the mother, tartly. "An indolent, feckless girl, with her head full of romance, that's what Violet is!"

"My dear," said her husband, slowly, "I begin to think we've made a mistake."

All trace of softness was gone now; Mrs. Ward was in a regular temper.

"Speak for yourself please, John," she said, sharply. "I never make mistakes!"

"How much did we spend on housekeeping last year, Patty? Such a good manager as you'll know the amount to a penny."

"Two hundred and seventy pounds, and not a penny of it was wasted, so I don't see where the mistake comes in."

"I'm getting to that. We've only two children, Patty, we're not likely to have any more."

"I can't think what you're driving at."

"I'll make it clear soon. My income is nine hundred. Next year it'll be a thousand if I'm spared. If I were laid aside to-morrow the firm would pay me a third of my salary till I died; my life is insured for a good round sum; and we've saved money—how much, Patty?"

"Four thousand pounds."

"Then, my dear, don't you see we're secure, humanly speaking; whatever happens, death and infirmity are both provided for. There's a nice little sum for the girls when they marry, and I think we might begin to spend."

"I'm not going to waste your substance in riotous living!"

"Another servant and a few pretty things for the two girls, and perhaps thirty pounds a-piece for pocket money, wouldn't amount to riotous living."

"I don't see the use of change."

"But the girls—you don't want them to be old maids, do you, Patty?"

He had touched the right chord now: like a great many other women of her type, Mrs. Ward had a special objection to spinsters; she was up in arms at the bare idea.

"Really, John, you need not be down upon your own children. Of course they'll marry,

though Violet's husband will need a pretty penny to pay for her fancies!"

"Martha's turned twenty-seven," said Mr. Ward, cheerfully, "and I haven't seen the ghost of a lover yet. Violet told her cousin to-night he was the first young man she had ever spoken to."

Mrs. Ward was a truth speaker, so she did not contradict this. She began to look rather grave.

"I don't believe in girls thinking about nothing but getting married."

"Neither do I, only they can't be married without thinking about it; and it seems to me twenty-seven is old enough to begin. You weren't nineteen, Patty, when you gave me your promise."

"I thought visitors were a great expense, and that we needed to be economical."

"But the need is over now."

"But I can't turn round suddenly and ask all the street to come and call."

"Hardly."

"And we know no one."

"I think Jack's coming will make a change of face easier," said Mr. Ward, quietly. "He will naturally make a good many friends—I believe Colonials always do—and if we told him they would be welcome here—"

"You must understand one thing," said his wife, firmly, "once for all. I won't let Martha go to Africa!"

"My dear, no one wants her to."

"That young man is as near as possible her own age, and he will be thrown a great deal into her society. I would do many things to please you, John, but not this one. I won't let my favourite child spend her life in the wilds."

"All right, Patty. The moment I see the slightest danger of Jack wanting to marry Martha I'll tell him it can't be. Will that satisfy you?"

"I shall probably tell him myself. You are quite in earnest, John? You really want these changes made?"

"Yes. I'll give the girls a cheque for their first quarter to-morrow before I go to town, and I'll draw you one for fifty pounds to furnish up the house. We've spent many years, dear, in providing against misfortunes happening to our children; let's turn our thoughts the other way now, and do our best to give them both a little happiness and amusement."

CHAPTER III.

THAT same Sunday evening, an hour after Jack Tremaine left Denmark-hill, he might have been seen in a comfortable sitting-room at the Charing Cross Hotel *à-la-carte* with a very pretty girl.

The last word suited her best, although she was really a matron of four years standing, the mother of two children, and the wife of a leading colonial statesman.

"Alan has had to go and see some one on business," was her petulant greeting to Jack.

"Really, I think he might be left in peace on Sundays."

"Never mind," said Jack, who seemed on most familiar terms with his patron's wife, "you know you enjoy the reflection of his importance enormously. You would have been miserable as the wife of a nobody."

"Of course. Will you ring for supper, Jack? Alan said we were not to wait, he may not be in till ten."

Supper came and was discussed; then the two drew their chairs to the fire, for the spring evening was cold to those born beneath an African sun.

Mrs. Dermot looked the picture of prosperity in her long house gown of black silk trimmed plentifully with jet, it suited her blue eyes and fair flaxen hair to perfection; but if she imagined it gave her the appearance of added age or dignity she was sadly mistaken, she looked a girl in her teens rather than a matron of two-and-twenty.

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"Well!"

"Really, Tina, that monosyllable might mean anything. What do you wish it to convey?"

"Don't be a torment, Jack. I want to hear everything. To begin with, did you find your uncle?"

"I don't think you need call him that."

"Do go on. You are keeping me in suspense. Did he show you the door, and refuse to believe your identity?"

"He did nothing of the kind. He seems a thoroughly good-hearted man. He received me most warmly, and offered to try and get me a post as clerk."

"How very condescending. I hope you accepted."

"I told him I was only in England to make inquiries for a friend concerning some missing relations, and that I feared I was not suited for office work. He hoped my mother would be comfortably provided for while I was away. I am sure, poor fellow, he pictures her taking in plain needlework!"

Tina laughed, and showed all her pretty white teeth as though this was a capital joke.

"Do go on."

"My dear child, there's not much to tell. The servant was out, they only keep one, Aunt Martha and her first-born were at church, Uncle John and the other girl were taking care of the house."

"What are the girls like?"

"Great contrasts to each other. The younger one opened the door to me, and said the Brinkmans lived at the next house. I had great work to get her to believe I had really come to see Mr. Ward."

"Was she pretty?" demanded Tina.

"I don't know. She was very small, and had a wistful sort of face, as though things went rather hardly with her. I thought her name just suited her, she was just like a little wood violet."

"And her sister?"

He laughed heartily.

"She was big enough for a dragoon or grenadier. No fear of her being trampled on, since she looked able to fight any amount of battles."

"You know," says Mrs. Dermot, in a graver tone, "Alan thoroughly disapproves of our plot. He says it's disrespectful to mother and dangerous."

"Mother will forgive us any day," says Jack, promptly; "but if Alan is really against it I mustn't implicate you."

"Oh, I'll get Alan to hear reason, only you mustn't ask me to go to Camberwell."

"Denmark hill."

"Camberwell," persisted Tina. "If I went there I should let out everything in a minute. When we get a house you can bring the whole family to call on me if you like. Tell them I am the wife of Alan Dermot, Esq., I.M.A., and a leader in colonial society."

"You concealed minx!" retorted Jack, "remember they are your own relations."

And they were. For the pretty little matron was Tremaine's sister, and the daughter of the poor little music-teacher who had toiled so bravely for her living long years ago in Rotherhithe.

Tina had been born when her parents' troubles were at the worst; but they did not seem to have affected her spirits, for from her babyhood she had been a veritable sunbeam, and a great many people thought Alan Dermot very lucky to secure such a charming wife, albeit she had not a penny of fortune.

John Ward had done Mrs. Tremaine a better turn than he knew of when he told his sister's old lover of her misfortune. Mr. Massey simply pulled up stakes and made tracks for the colony which contained the one woman he had loved. He found her in abject poverty, her husband a hopeless invalid, and till Edward Tremaine's death he settled near them, making them a liberal allowance. When Violet became a widow, mindful of gossip, he removed to the capital, taking Jack with him

for his education. He had cared for the boy as though he had been his own son, and it was while on a visit to him that Tina met her husband.

The blunt unpolished tradesman was an immense favourite in his adopted country—no one there ever suspected for whose sake he had left his native land—and when he died he was universally regretted.

He left his whole fortune to Jack Tremaine, with an earnest recommendation that he should settle in England and buy an estate; for Massey's wealth, originally large, had doubled and trebled of late years by successful speculations.

Young Tremaine consulted his mother, and soon found her heart yearned for her native land. His brother-in-law told him frankly he was out out for an English country gentleman, and so Jack sailed for Southampton with the Dermots, it being understood that he was to spend some time in the old country, and make up his mind whether he would cast in his lot there or return to Africa.

None of her children would have whispered as much, but Mrs. Tremaine's yearnings after her brother and his family formed the sole reason of Jack's hesitation. The young people were not at all favourably disposed towards their uncle; of course they had heard of their mother's youth, and though she had spoken of her brother most affectionately, Mr. Massey had painted Mrs. John Ward in very repulsive colours, and the impression in their minds was that their uncle was a common poor-spirited man entirely under the influence of a virago.

If their mother went to England she would hold out the olive branch at once, and fill her home with her brother's family. The very fact that the home would really be Jack's and not her's must prevent his remonstrating and so he decided it was best for him to go over to the old country alone and reconnoitre the enemy. His brother-in-law's starting on a six months' holiday gave him company on the voyage; and Jack and Tina who had always been kindred spirits, relieved the monotony of the journey by concocting a plot as harmless as it was intricate, namely, that all mention of Mr. Massey's legacy should be kept back, and young Tremaine should introduce himself to his uncle as Mr. Dermot's secretary.

"You know you did write two letters for Alan when he was ill," said Tina, wickedly, "and that is being a secretary."

When he got to Denmark-hill Jack found himself obliged rather to modify this scheme. His uncle's offer to try and get him a clerkship was so frank and kind it touched his heart; besides, if he went at all often to Hartley-street they would soon discover when he left the Dermots, and so he represented himself as "making inquiries for the relations of a friend in Africa." It was quite true, for his mother and he were the closest friends. As for Mrs. Tremaine's betraying the secret, that was easily guarded against. He could tell her he had found her brother well and prosperous, but he might forget to mention Mr. Ward's address, and so prevent his mother writing direct to Denmark hill.

Jack sat up after his sister had gone to bed. He wanted a word with Mr. Dermot; there were more than ten years between them, but he and Alan were rare chums.

"What, Jack! Back from your voyage of discovery. How did you fare?"

"Uncommonly well; but Tina has been frightening me, Dermot, she says you disapproving of our mummery."

"I don't approve of it, Jack."

"Where's the harm?"

"There's no harm exactly, only trouble sometimes comes of such little comedies;" then, seeing the young man's disappointed face, "Never mind, Jack, I won't spoil sport. If you only keep up the deceit for a few weeks, perhaps no one will be the worse for it. They are not old friends of yours who would have a right to complain of your want of confidence."

"Tina says I may bring my uncle and aunt to see her."

"Not unless they know she is their niece," said the statesman, gravely. "I don't want to seem churlish, old fellow, but don't draw Tina into it; she is so fond of fun she might carry the joke farther than you intended."

Jack looked thoughtful.

"I've promised to go down again to-morrow and spend the evening with my relations. After all, Dermot, I haven't told them any falsehoods. It's quite true that I've come over here to make inquiries, and see whether there's a good opening for me to settle in the old country."

"Ay, but Mr. Ward understands you to mean an opening to earn money, and what you are looking for is a good investment. There's a good deal of harm comes of men making themselves out richer than they are, and I can't help thinking mischief may follow the opposite deception."

Jack shook his head.

"You are so dreadfully cautious, Alan."

"Was aunt Martha very terrible?"

"Rather better than I expected. Her daughter is as big as a grenadier."

"O!" laughed the statesman, who had no idea there were two girls. "Then as you always admire small women, I suppose you have not lost your heart?"

"I shouldn't think Miss Ward would ever marry at all," said Jack, frankly; "she looks so very able to take care of herself, no one will offer to do it for her."

CHAPTER IV.

THERE was speechless amazement written on the faces of the two sisters when John Ward presented them each with a cheque for seven pounds ten, and said they would have the same in future every three months.

The city man was not prone to much speaking. He had only ten minutes left before he must start to catch the omnibus, and he put a great deal in a few words.

"While you were children your mother and I thought we would economise in every possible way so as to make a provision for you; but we have saved enough now to secure you from want whatever happens, so as you are both grown up, I think we may as well spend more money and give you a little pleasure."

"We were perfectly happy before," said Martha, complacently; "we did not want any change."

"Oh! it will be delightful," was Violet's outburst. "Dad, are you quite sure you can afford it? I feel as if I were in a delightful dream, and I should wake up directly and find it all a mistake."

Mr. Ward kissed her and departed. In the ordinary course of things, his wife would have gone to inspect the larder, and write out the weekly orders for the trades-people, but this morning she stood irresolute.

She was a good manager, and loved economy; but, even in all these years, she had not quite lost her love of shopping. To go to London and make purchases on a liberal scale had its charm for her. She looked up to find Violet watching her wistfully.

"I hope you are not vexed, mother," said the girl, softly; "but, oh! it does seem lovely."

Mrs. Ward looked at Violet more kindly than usual.

"No, my dear, I am not vexed. Your father says we are rich enough to launch out a little; he wishes to make things pleasant for your cousin during his stay in England, and I am glad we can afford it. Only," she hesitated, "when one has been trying to make money go as far as possible all one's life, it seems a little strange to alter."

"I shall not alter," said Martha, sharply. "There is no good in buying things one doesn't want. I shall put this money in the bank. I have quite a nice little sum already the Post Office."

"I don't think that is what your father

recent," said Mrs. Ward, quietly. "What are you going to buy, Violet?"

Violet almost gasped.

"Some pictures and music, and books first; and I want a new pipe for father, and some pretty things to make my room look nice, and pots of flowers, and—"

"Really, V.," said Mrs. Ward, smiling, "if you do all that to-day, you will hardly be home in time to welcome your cousin. I am going to London as soon as I have seen Jane, and you and Martha can come with me if you like."

She was not a woman to do things by halves. Her husband had convinced her they needed to make a change in their way of life, and she meant it to be a thorough one; but the girl she had brought up on her own model could not alter so thoroughly and suddenly.

Martha looked at her mother as though she thought she was demoted.

"There is all the mending to do," she ventured to observe, rather anxiously; "Monday is the proper day for it."

"It can wait for once," said her mother, cheerfully; "there will be plenty of time to-morrow."

"To-morrow will bring its own duties," said Martha, firmly. "Procrastination is bad."

Mrs. Ward winced. They were her own maxims, and yet they pained her; coming back to her from the lips of her favourite child, they hurt her.

She tried to pass it over lightly, and some half an hour later she and Violet started, leaving Martha, with her mending basket, sitting in virtuous solitude.

It seemed to Violet her mother had grown downright extravagant, for Mrs. Ward made several purchases at a local confectioner's, ordering the things to be sent home without fail by five o'clock. Then she turned in the direction of the Green, and they took an omnibus to Oxford Circus, and entered the Junior Army and Navy Stores, of which Mr. Ward had long been a member, though his frugal wife usually sent her orders by post.

They spent a delightful morning, and when Mrs. Ward proposed lunch, and they went into the big room adjoining the refreshment buffet, it really seemed to Violet like a special fairy gift that, at the table, already dishing cakes and coffee, she should find Mrs. Grey and her daughter Kitty.

The girls had been together at the High School; the mothers, though neither had ever entered the other's house, yet possessed the casual acquaintance which comes of living very close together, and of continually seeing each other's goings and comings. The two parties, therefore, coalesced at once; and for Violet the pleasures of that wonderful day had doubled.

And, had she really heard aright? Was her mother actually pressing Mrs. Grey to let Kitty and her eldest brother come in to tea that night, because "we have a nephew from Africa spending the evening, and we want to make things pleasant for him?"

Mrs. Grey accepted promptly. She decided in her own mind that Mrs. Ward's unsociability must have been greatly exaggerated, and that she was a very sensible, kind-hearted woman.

The tutor's wife then ventured to confide to her new acquaintances how anxious they were to get one or two of "the boys" suitable openings in the colonies; Mr. Tremaine might perhaps give them some information.

Mrs. Ward shook her head.

"To tell the truth, that is what Jack needs to find for himself. He has come over to England to see if he could hear of any occupation which would enable him to send for his mother and sisters, but I fear everything is overcrowded."

The girls kept up a conversation of their own a little apart, though that of the elder ladies reached them.

Suddenly, as some new comers entered the room, Kitty whispered to Violet,—

"Is she not beautiful?"

"Lovely," returned Violet. "I never saw a face I liked so much!"

The young lady, the subject of this praise, would have been well pleased could she have heard it; for admiration of any kind never came amiss to pretty Mrs. Dermot.

Tina and her husband, seated themselves not very far from Mrs. Ward's party, and became a subject of much conjecture to the girls.

"He can't be her father," said Kitty, "he looks too young."

"Perhaps he is her husband."

"Oh, no! Violet, she can't be married; she doesn't look more than seventeen."

As they were leaving the room, Violet noticed the pretty stranger's glove lying on the ground, liable to be trodden on by the first comer. She picked it up and restored it to its owner, receiving the sweetest smile of thanks.

This little incident was soon forgotten; only the smile and the beautiful, deeply-set, grey-blue eyes lingered in Violet's memory. She little thought with what agony she was to see both again.

Mrs. Ward did things thoroughly. By her private instructions before she left home Jane had lighted a fire in the long disused dining-room, and Violet discovered tea was to be taken there.

The table looked bright and pretty. The mother did not even utter a reproof when Violet placed a pot of spring flowers, one of her own recent purchases, in the centre.

The best china and silver graced the board, and Jane, instead of grumbling at the unwonted exertion, was positively beaming with pleasure.

"I do like to see things look nice, Miss Violet; and a bit of company does one good, and this is the first I've known since I came here."

Mrs. Ward put on her best dress of black silk, handsome though old-fashioned. Violet was thankful to remember her last year's summer frock was of grey nun's veiling, a colour that harmonises with everything. She put on a heliotrope sash and a knot of heliotrope ribbons at her throat, and decided that for once she looked quite "nice." Her mother glanced at her approvingly.

"Grey suits you, child, Martha," as her favourite came into the room, "aren't you going to change your dress?"

Miss Ward wore her usual afternoon gown of dark brown homespun.

"I don't see the use," she said, quietly. "If this colonial cousin is coming often he can't expect us to put ourselves out for him. My best dress would soon get shabby if I wore it continually. Violet has decked herself out as if it was a party; I wonder you like it, mother."

Violet had vanished, Mrs. Ward looked troubled.

"She is only a child, Martha."

"And a very idle, ill-behaved one, as you have often said."

"By-the-by," said the mother, speaking almost timidly, for she really began to feel afraid of her model daughter, "we met the Greys at the stores, Martha, and I asked Kitty and her eldest brother to look in to-night."

"Whatever for? We are not a wild beast show. Why should they look at us?"

"My dear, I mean I asked them to tea; so really, Martha, you had better change your dress."

"Kitty Grey has not a gown belonging to her that cost half-a-crown a yard," said Martha, stroking the homespun approvingly. "I need not study her."

Miss Grey quite justified Martha's remark, for she came in a very pretty light dress which had probably cost a mere trifle; but she was a bright, animated girl, and Mrs. Ward began to think Jack Tremaine might do worse than marry her, since all the Greys had been

brought up "respectably," and would so be suitable to life in the wilds.

Jack rather undeceived her as to her ideas of Colonial life; he told her Mr. Dermot's house was as commodious as an English dwelling, and that his wife had her dresses from Paris, and enjoyed the services of an English maid.

"You can get anything you want out there, Aunt Martha," he concluded, "so long as you can pay for it. It costs a little more than it would here, that's all the difference."

Mrs. Ward's first essay at hospitality was a wonderful success; and after the Greys had left, Jack lingered to smoke a last pipe and talk over his plans with his uncle.

He gave very little information about his mission in England; but he said, frankly, he should not remain with the Dermots.

"They are only over for six months, less than that really, as the voyage to and from has to be counted. Mr. Dermot is a public man, with heaps of people to see and hundreds of things to do. I want my time to myself, and shall be much freer and independent in rooms."

"It will cost a good deal more," said Mrs. Ward, practically.

"Oh, I don't know. Everything in England seems so cheap. No one lives in lodgings with us. It's a case of hotel or boarding-house; but here it seems a good many fellows live in diggings."

"There are some to let in the next street," said his aunt, thoughtfully, "and I believe they are very reasonable."

Jack Tremaine took the rooms in the next street, and spent a good deal of his spare time at his uncle's house. That he should be a favourite with John Ward seemed natural enough; but that the practical managing housewife should take to him was surprising even to her husband and girls, but so it was. Whether she thought of her dead son, who would have been just Jack's age by now, or whether she really liked a young man about the house no one ever discovered; but "Aunt Martha" would welcome the colonist at any hour of the twenty-four, and though she did not at all count Jack as a prodigal, yet she was continually treating him to a modern equivalent of the fatted calf.

Jack had come to England, expecting to detest her, or at best tolerate her for his uncle's sake; but in a month he had conceived a strong attachment to her—she was so thorough, and he hated affectation. Mrs. Ward was genuine to her finger tips, and frankly told Jack of her mistake.

"I can see it all now. But you see, my dear, we began humbly when things really were a struggle, and I went on pinching long after the need for it had ceased. It was for the girls' sakes I did it. I don't care for money myself, though I daresay your poor mother thought me mercenary when I wanted her to marry a rich man instead of your father."

"Mother never said a harsh word of you, Aunt Martha," Jack assured her. "Her greatest desire is to come home and settle in England."

"But I suppose you can't see your way to it," said Mrs. Ward, kindly. "The voyage alone would be a great expense for three people."

"It would only be two," replied Jack, thankful he could say one thing frankly; "nothing would induce my eldest sister to live in England, she is devoted to the colony. Rita is different, she would never leave my mother. I hope to have them here before the year is out."

Mrs. Ward shook her head.

"Don't do anything rash," she said, sagely; "being poor here is very painful work, and I don't think—"

"Please go on," said Jack, as she stopped abruptly.

"I was only going to say I don't think you at all economical. Forgive me, Jack; of course I ought not to interfere, but it is quite true."

"I am afraid it is," said young Tremaine, who knew that with twelve thousand a year he would never have great need to cultivate the economy whose absence his aunt so much deplored.

"It may not matter so much now," went on his mentor, sagely, "but supposing you wanted to marry?"

Jack had been nearly two months in England now and was quite an old inhabitant of Denmark-hill. Mrs. Ward and he were alone on this particular June afternoon. Martha had taken her mending upstairs; she was one of those women who cannot bear a man, as they express it, "hanging about in the daytime," and her cousin's frequent intrusions were pain and grief to her. Violet and Kitty Grey had gone over to the Bon Marché at Brixton on shopping intent.

"Well," said Mr. Tremaine with a touch of embarrassment, "it won't be difficult to suppose that, Aunt Martha, for it happens to be the truth. There is nothing in the world I desire so much at the present moment as to be married."

"Do you mean you are engaged?" asked the matron in surprise.

"By no means. I only wish it had got as far as that. I can't bring myself to risk all and propose, because she seems so utterly blind to my wishes. I really think sometimes she purposely avoids me!"

"But who is it?" cried Mrs. Ward, a dreadful suspicion seizing her. "My dear John, I only hope you have not fallen in love with Martha. We all like you extremely; but I could never spare my favourite child to live in another hemisphere."

Jack did not laugh; he did not even smile; he knew the mother was utterly blind to Martha's ill-temper and manifest old-maidishness; but he answered quite gravely,—

"Be easy, aunt, it's not Martha. I wish you would tell me how much a year a young couple might start on here?"

"You see, Jack, it depends so much on themselves. Your uncle and I began on a pound a week."

Mr. Tremaine threw up his hands.

"I couldn't do that. I've no head for figures, and I couldn't leave all the troubles to my wife. I was wondering if two hundred—"

"Two hundred would keep you and Mrs. Jack; but it would never maintain your mother and sisters too."

"I suppose not," he answered, gravely. "I must be going now, Aunt Martha. I promised to be at the Dermoys by five."

"You never told me where they had taken a house?"

"Not very far from here. On Streatham-hill. They've got it furnished for the time of their stay, but they are very seldom there themselves; it's more a place to deposit their children, servants, and numerous purchases, than a home for themselves."

He was gone before Mrs. Ward recollected she had not yet learned the name of his divinity; but she reflected he went hardly anywhere, except to their house, and saw no girls save his cousins and the Greys.

"Of course it is Kitty," decided the astute matron, who, in this particular instance, was dreadfully mistaken.

CHAPTER V.

It was three months since Violet Ward had saved the window of her little bedroom and wondered what was the use of living, and Violet was changed in those three months; she had had ripened into the blossom, the spring flower had developed into a bright, light-hearted girl, and her father, watching her, decided the change he had insisted on had borne good fruit and his little girl was happy at last.

Mrs. Ward had given up calling Violet "a plain little white thing," she still thought

her far inferior to Martha, but she was ready to confess the child had improved wonderfully of late, and that she might yet turn out something in time. As to Kitty Grey, between whom and Vi a great friendship had sprung up, she told her mother Violet Ward was the nicest girl in Denmark-hill, and that she should be awfully sorry when she went to Africa. For Kitty had much clearer eyes than Violet's mother, and had guessed Mr. John Tremaine's secret almost before he knew it himself.

Mrs. Ward and Martha had gone out, and Vi was at home alone. She sat in the drawing-room, no longer given over to the glory of seclusion and white crochet antimacassars. A dainty piece of embroidery was in her hands, but she was not working: her thoughts were very far away.

She had glanced at an almanack that morning and discovered it was just three months since Jack came to England. He had said six would be the limit of his stay. How should they ever get on without him? It was true the solid advantages of the new state of things would exist—the allowance of money, the moderate share of amusement, of pleasant company and pretty things—but what would all these be worth without John?

He came in quietly while she was thinking this. He was such a frequent visitor that Jane never thought of announcing him. He caught sight of the tremulous expression on Violet's face, and hastily demanded what was the matter.

"Nothing," replied the girl, mendaciously. "Everyone is out except me. I am so sorry, Jack."

"But I am not," answered Jack, frankly, taking her hand in his, "for, as it happens, I came on purpose to talk to you seriously."

"To me?" exclaimed Violet. "Why, I am not at all a serious person, Jack. Martha says I am terribly frivolous."

"Never mind Martha," said Jack, who, it is to be feared, did not properly appreciate that virgin. "I want to talk to you."

"Yes."

"Vi, you are too provoking! Have you forgotten the first time we ever met when you were so bent on sending me next door to the Brinkmans?"

"I remember perfectly. I don't think, Jack, I am a good hand at forgetting."

"I don't think you are. Well, Vi, that night caused a change in my whole life. I did not understand it myself at the time, but I know now it was love at first sight. Violet, my little cousin, my sweet spring flower, will you be my wife?"

The girl's eyes fell. She could not meet his ardent gaze.

"You don't understand, Jack," she said, slowly. "I am only a little white thing. You ought to marry somebody charming."

"You are charming in my eyes, sweetheart. I would not change my little white violet for all the beauties of England."

"And—"

"Never mind the 'ands,' my darling. You have not answered my question yet. Can you ever learn to love me?"

"I have loved you always," she whispered, "ever since that first Sunday."

"And you will marry me? Sweetheart, I shall not have to ask you to forsake friends and country for my sake. I can make a home for you in England, Vi, where hardships can never touch you."

"I should not mind hardships with you," replied Violet. "But, Jack, are you quite sure? You have travelled and seen all sorts of things, and I have spent nearly all my life in one place. Are you sure you won't grow tired of me?"

"Quite sure! Violet, let us keep our secret for two or three days. As soon as the next mail from Africa comes in I will speak to Uncle John. I think he likes me, darling, though he may not like my robbing him of his spring flower."

"Father is very fond of you, Jack. He was

saying last night how much he wished you could afford to settle in England."

"We will settle here, Violet. I don't explain it now, dear, but my prospects are brighter than you think, and I shall be able to build a nest worthy of my bride; but—"

"But what, Jack?"

He hesitated. "Never until this moment had he regretted what he and Tina called their little comedy. Somehow, sitting here on this July afternoon with Violet's clear eyes looking so trustfully into his, he remembered his brother-in-law's words, 'no good ever comes of a deception.'"

But it was too late now for repentance. He had done his utmost. When he grew intimate with the Wards, when he learned his own secret and knew that Violet was his heart's one love, he wrote to his mother and confessed his fraud. He begged her to write to her brother and implore his forgiveness for the deceit practised on him.

Mrs. Tremaine's answer was due by the next mail, and but for finding Violet alone and such a golden opportunity presenting itself, Jack would probably have kept his love-story untold until his mother had done her task.

He knew that Mrs. Ward would forgive him, but he was afraid of his uncle. John Friday Ward was such an honest, plain-spoken man himself, he might attach too much importance to Tina's pretty plot. Vi herself might resent it. Though his darling had promised him her love, Jack felt strangely uneasy. He found it difficult to answer Violet's question and meet her clear blue eyes.

"You have said you love me, Vi; will you promise to forgive me when I tell you the one thing that preys upon my mind?"

"I don't think you can need my forgiveness, Jack," the girl answered with sweetness; "but there is nothing in the world I would not do for you, and I—I think you know it."

A double knock at the door, and the entry of a visitor.

Kitty Grey could not have arrived at a more inopportune moment, poor girl; but how could she guess that her entrance provoked Jack's confession. Five minutes more, and he would have told Violet all. As it was, feeling in no mood to talk polite nothings with a third person, he took his leave.

Kitty was discreet, and asked no questions—indeed, she was so full of her own news she hardly noticed that she had disturbed a *tic-a-tic*.

Some one had given her father two tickets for a show of pictures in Bond-street, and she waited Violet to promise to go there with her to-morrow.

"One doesn't want a chaperon for pictures, you know," she said, cheerfully, "it's not like a concert or anything where you sit down, and people can see directly whether you've a duenna; but if we had half a dozen we couldn't proclaim the fact while we were wrangling about looking at the different pictures."

"I will ask mother," said Vi, feeling for once in her life rather reluctant for a jaunt in quest of pleasure, for might not Jack call to-morrow to resume the *tic-a-tic* Kitty had interrupted?

But Mrs. Ward came in before the young visitor had departed and gave her unqualified consent to the expedition.

"I met Jack just now," she said, carelessly. "He is going up to town for two nights, so I suppose we shall not see anything of him till Saturday."

The morrow was a beautiful day, and, there being no question of her lover's coming, Violet was very well content to accompany Kitty to the picture gallery in Bond-street.

She wore a new dress of heliotrope tulle with large bunches of her namesake flower woven in it so naturally that you might have fancied someone had dropped the blossoms there. A large white hat completely screened her face,

making her look, as Kitty observed, "like someone else."

"It's a very pretty hat," Miss Grey admitted; "but you are quite lost in it, Vi. I shouldn't know you if I met you."

They reached the picture gallery between three and half-past, and it seemed to Kitty that all the world and his wife were there, as it was July, and the season was waning, the crush seemed extraordinary, but presently it began to clear—ladies decided a turn in the Park would be refreshing after this crowd—and before Violet and Kitty had been there an hour the gallery was completely deserted.

"Look!" said Miss Grey suddenly, to her friend, as her quick eyes recognised Jack Tremaine, "there's your cousin, and I do declare he's with that beautiful girl we saw at the Stores the first time you and I ever were together in London."

Violet's heart gave a sudden thump, and then seemed to stand still with pain, so sharp was the shock of the discovery. She turned her eyes in the direction of Kitty's glance.

Yes, she could not be mistaken, it was Jack; and the vision of beauty beside him was indeed the stranger she had seen at the Stores, whose glove she had picked up.

The pair seemed far too engrossed in their own conversation to take any interest in the pictures.

Kitty, who had not been blind to Mr. Tremaine's attentions to Violet, was full of honest indignation at his *empress* lover like manner to his fair-haired companion.

Violet had turned white as death, and, intent on getting her a seat before she fainted, Kitty led her to a settee close to the one occupied by Mr. Tremaine, quite forgetting that though he would not recognise them, since his back was towards them, his conversation would be perfectly audible to them.

In a few moments Violet had rallied, pride and courage had both come to her aid, and she whispered,—

"I am quite well now; let us be going. I think we have seen all the pictures, Kitty."

"Yes, but we can't go without passing by your cousin," said Kitty, in the same low tone; "and I am sure you would rather he did not recognise you, as he is with strangers."

They were so close, that Vi could have stretched out her hand and almost touched her lover's.

She saw the force of Kitty's objection, since there was no exit at that end of the gallery, and they must have passed under Jack's eyes had they retraced their steps; but she was not prepared for what followed.

"You are awfully stupid, Jack," said a girl's sweet, merry voice; "in your place, I should have ended matters long ago."

"I daresay," replied Jack Tremaine, in a grave, troubled tone; "but you see, my dear, I happen to possess a conscience and some sense of shame, and I find the consequences of my little amusement by no means pleasant."

Kitty Grey held Violet's hand tightly clasped in her own. She never questioned that the speaker referred to his flirtation with her friend, and her anger knew no bounds.

Violet grew whiter and whiter, but there was nothing for it but to sit still. Not for worlds would Kitty have suffered the stricken girl to pass full in view of Jack and his companion.

"Well," said the latter, slowly, "I believe you are making a big big blunder, and that she won't mind at all. She may at first, just a little, but she will very soon get over it. I should myself."

"But all women are not little butterflies like you Tina," said Jack, reproachfully. "However, I suppose, blaming you for my own egregious folly won't mend matters, so we had better be going."

"When shall you tell her?"

"I don't know. I suppose I am a coward, for I keep putting it off. I shall wait now till the African mail is in, I think."

"Ah! Well, if she's very irate, you must

come to me for consolation. And now, my dear old Jack, I am sure my carriage must have come, and I can't spare any more time for you and your tribulations, so let us be going."

CHAPTER VI. AND LAST.

"REALLY, Violet," said her mother, with a trace of her old sharpness, "I shan't let you go out gallivanting with Kitty Grey, if this is the consequence. You came home on Thursday looking like a ghost, all Friday you were in bed with a sick headache, and now you declare you are too ill to come down to supper."

Violet looked at her mother with troubled eyes. How could she explain her unwillingness to meet Jack Tremaine, since every fibre of her nature shrank from revealing her cousin's treachery.

She had sworn Kitty Grey to secrecy on their walk from the omnibus to Hartley-street, and her friend had reluctantly agreed. But then even Kitty did not know all; she had no idea that Violet was really Jack's betrothed when she listened to that cruel conversation.

"I am so tired, mamma."

"The hot weather makes you feel languid," said Mrs. Ward, in a milder tone; "but, really, you ought to rouse yourself, and Jack is coming to tea to-night."

"Father can entertain him."

"But I wanted someone young and bright, for Kitty can't come; she sent in to tell me so just now. And, you know, Jack thinks so much of her."

"Does he?" Violet perfectly understood her friend's motive, and appreciated it. "I think you are mistaken, mother. Kitty has no money, and Jack will want an heiress at the very least."

Fortunately, Mrs. Ward did not detect the bitterness in her daughter's voice. Becoming convinced she could not change Violet's decision she went downstairs, and told Martha if "the child did not seem herself by Monday, they must send for the doctor."

"It's only temper," said Martha, abruptly.

"If there were any amusement in prospect Violet would be all right again in an hour!"

Jack Tremaine looked round the room as though he missed something, and his aunt explained Miss Grey's absence.

"I wasn't looking for her," said Jack, simply; "where's Violet?"

"Violet isn't very well," explained her mother. "She went to London on Thursday with Kitty Grey to see some pictures, and the heat knocked her up."

"It was awfully hot," agreed Jack. "I was at a picture gallery myself, and the heat reminded me of Africa. I perfectly revelled in it!"

"Well, Violet didn't revel in it. She came home looking like a ghost, and she has not been herself at all since."

"I hope it's nothing serious," said Jack, anxiously; "has she seen a doctor?"

"What a fuss you all make," said Martha, tartly. "There's nothing the matter with her but temper."

Jack said nothing more, but he acted promptly. He and Jane were the best of friends, and the following morning Violet received this little note, which found its way accidentally to her dressing-table.

"MY DARLING,—

"You are making me terribly anxious. Your mother has asked me to spend the day to-morrow. Do let me see you then, and judge for myself what is the matter."

"Your devoted,

"J. T."

"Jane," said Violet, in the sharpest tone the old servant had ever heard from her, "how did this note get here?"

"What note, Miss Violet?"

"From Mr. Tremaine."

But Jane denied all knowledge of it. Violet kept her room the whole of Sunday; then feeling some explanation with her cousin was necessary, as she could hardly go on shutting herself up entirely, she wrote two lines.

"I know everything. All is over between us. Good-bye. I don't forgive you, and I never shall."

"VIOLET."

"Jane," said her young lady, coldly, "since you brought me Mr. Tremaine's note you may as well take him the answer."

She did not even caution secrecy. To Violet in her distracted state it mattered little if everyone knew Jack had jilted her. She had risen the next morning and would have gone down as usual; but her mother, horrified at her wan face, and the purple rims round her eyes, insisted on her not leaving her room.

"You can rest on the bed," she said, kindly, "and presently, when you have had some breakfast, you shall go and lie on the drawing-room sofa. I shall send for Dr. West at once."

But on one point Vi was firm, she would not go into the drawing-room—poor child! it was there she had listened to Jack Tremaine's wooing. So in the end Mrs. Ward gave way. A big reclining chair was carried to her room, and in that Violet sat half unconscious through the long hours of the summer morning.

Dr. West came early, and talked of a shock to her system. He questioned and cross-questioned the patient, and finally departed assuring Mr. Ward, however much the young lady might deny it, he was certain she had something on her mind.

Poor Mrs. Ward! She felt anxious and worried, and yet she was capable of a sensation of pleasure when, about three o'clock, a carriage and pair stopped at the house, and Jane came to say she had shown Mrs. Dermot into the drawing room.

"I am so glad," the pleased matron assured her daughter. "You know the Dermots are great people, quite grandees, if they are colonials, and I have often wondered Jack never introduced us to them. I wish you were well enough to see her, Vi."

A surprise greeted Mrs. Ward when she got to the drawing-room. A pretty, childish-looking creature came forward to greet her and cried, impulsively,—

"Please, Aunt Martha, I'm your niece Christina. I told Jack I should come to-day and introduce myself."

"My niece!" ejaculated Mrs. Ward, "the servant said Mrs. Dermot."

"I've been Mrs. Dermot for five years; but, all the same, I am your niece and Jack's sister, and I've a dreadfully long story to tell you; only first I want you to promise to forgive Jack, for it was all my fault."

"My dear," cried Mrs. Ward, much impressed at being "aunt" to this elegant creature. "I am sure I am very pleased to see you, but I have nothing to forgive Jack, we parted last night on the best of terms."

"But your daughter Violet won't forgive him, and the poor boy is nearly broken-hearted."

And then Tina poured out the whole story of her "pretty comedy," and her own and her brother's penitence.

"It was awfully wicked of us, Aunt Martha—Alan, that's my husband, always said so—but we meant no harm; and when Jack fell in love with Violet he was properly punished, for he has been frightened to death ever since lest you and Uncle John should be too angry to forgive him."

Mrs. Ward was magnanimous.

"My dear Tina, say no more. We are all very fond of Jack, and I will confess we have grown much more intimate and at home with him than we might have done if he had come among us as such a very rich man. Only I can't understand what you mean about Violet. I am certain she knows nothing of what you have told me."

"Then why did she write to Jack that she had discovered all, and would never forgive him?"

Mrs. Ward shook her head.

"Violet has been quite unlike herself ever since Thursday. She went with a friend to see some pictures in Bond-street, and she came home looking like a ghost. She has been ill ever since."

Tina Dermot had the clue the mother lacked. She positively clapped her hands.

"I see it all."

"My dear!"

"Why, I was at that picture gallery on Thursday with Jack. We didn't look at the pictures much, we just sat down and discussed Jack's troubles, and how he could explain his deception to Violet—and—"

"And you think she heard it?"

"I think," and Tina blushed rosy-red, "that though Jack is my brother and I am just an old married woman, Violet made a mistake and was jealous—of me. She did not know Jack had a sister in England, and she jumped to the conclusion he and I were—lovers."

A quarter of an hour later a tap came at Violet's door, and in reply to her "Come in" there entered the destroyer of her peace, the fair-haired syren who had promised to "console Jack" if his *faucets* proved obdurate.

With a bitter sob Violet rose to her feet, full of anger at the intrusion; but Tina, with a little smile, put one hand on her shoulder and forced her back into her chair, saying—

"Please don't get up. I know you are awfully angry with me, but I have only come here to try and put things right; for, Cousin Violet, I am—Jack's sister."

The following Christmas witnessed quite a family reunion at No. 19, Hartley-street, for Mr. and Mrs. John Tremaine came home from their long honeymoon in time to keep the festival with their friends; and the widowed Mrs. Tremaine and her daughter Marguerite, who now lived in Devonshire, were also Mrs. Ward's guests.

Most likely Jack would buy a "place" in Devonshire and a house in town, and he and his Violet both looked the picture of health and happiness, and the two mothers rejoiced, at their children's felicity.

Rita and Mrs. Tremaine had reached England in time for the wedding, which took place in September, in order that the Dermots might be present at it before they sailed for their distant home.

Kitty Grey was chief bridesmaid, Martha refused to be one at all, and confessed to Tina that for four whole days she had cordially detested her.

John Ward still went to the City every day, for he said he should feel miserable if he retired; but he and his wife are more open-handed than of yore, and enjoy to the full such pleasures and comforts as an ample income can afford.

No one has yet attempted to deprive Mrs. Ward of her favourite child. Martha is still unappropriated, and likely to remain so; in fact, Kitty Grey, who is a close observer, declares that there will be no other wedding from 19, Hartley-street than the one so nearly frustrated by A PRETTY COMEDY.

[THE END.]

THE ITALIANS invented the term *influenza* in the seventeenth century, and attributed the disease to the influence of certain planets.

It is said to be a remarkable fact that the poison of a scorpion gradually loses its effect upon a human being, and that man suffers less and less each time he is stung. One bold philosopher, it is related, had the courage to follow out this principle to the farthest extent, and made scorpions sting him repeatedly until he had become poison proof, and suffered but little inconvenience beyond the transient pain of the puncture.

AN EVIL DEED.

CHAPTER XXV.

A TELEGRAM FROM LEVISON.

"WHAT shall we do, father? Where shall we go to find the child?" cried Guy, in despairing tones, when they were well away from the tumble-down old house.

"Hanged if I know!" cried Bouverie, perplexedly, flicking impatiently at the golden gorse with his stout walking-stick. "Let's sit down lad, and have a think."

Guy sighed, but dropped down beside his father, and pulling up a blade of grass chewed away at it savagely, whilst he stared gloomily before him.

"I shall have a pipe," remarked Bouverie, presently. "I can always think better when I am smoking."

"That's true," said Guy, and followed his example.

"Hallo!" cried Bouverie, suddenly, staring at something in the far distance. "There's our turn out, boy!"

"Where?" said Guy, springing up, and looking all ways but the right one. "I don't see it."

"To the right. That fool James is driving it. I can see he is by the way it's swaying about. He'll have it over in a minute."

Guy, at last looking in the right direction, descried the erratically-driven Norfolk cart; and, laughing a little, ran forward to the rescue.

"Oh, Mr. Guy!" cried Bouverie's exhausted man, mopping his forehead, and looking gratefully at Guy holding the horse's head, "what a awful road to drive along! and what a beast of a pony!"

"Road!" shouted Bouverie, catching this remark as he strode up. "Why, man! you weren't on the road at all!"

James gazed about him in bewildered fashion.

"Where is the road, then, sir?" he asked, solemnly.

"There!" pointing to the beaten-out track. "That's a road, sir?" contemptuously. "That! Vell, give me the town if that's what they call a road in the country!"

Bouverie looked amused.

"But what brought you here, man?" he said, suddenly.

"Why, sir, Mr. Peveril's come home all of a sudden; and I thought as how you'd like to get back quick to him."

"Hal! Peveril back, Guy," called out his father. "I'm glad of that—he can help us."

"The more the better," said Guy, gravely, springing in at the back, while Bouverie took the reins from his exhausted man, and spun the cart along in fine style.

"There's the dear old chap at the gate!" he cried, as they rattled up to the Cottage. "Welcome home, old chap! How d'you like our diggings?"

"First-rate! capital!" was Peveril's hearty response, when they had nearly shaken their hands off.

"You're looking uncommonly well, old chum," went on Bouverie, scanning the jovial, kindly face, closely.

"That's more than I can say for the lad," answered Peveril, quickly, looking in a dissatisfied way at Guy's thoughtful, haggard face. "What's up, Guy?"

"Walk up and down with us, and I'll tell you," put in Bouverie, hastily. "The lad's rather too worried to talk."

The tale did not take long, for it was well and quickly told, and Bouverie had a very attentive listener.

"Guy, my lad," cried Peveril, "this is as good news to me as to your father. We've both longed to see our boy with a sweet, loving bride, and I, too, shall look upon her as a daughter!"

Guy's face glowed with pleasure, he held his old friend's hand in a close grip; for a

minute he had forgotten all but the one fact—that Barbara's love was his. Yet almost at once it came rushing back to his mind. He dropped the older man's hand and turned away with a heavy sigh.

"You see, the darling child has disappeared. That scoundrel has managed to hide her away," murmured Bouverie.

"Yes; but, hang it all! he must be made to speak—we will force him to tell!" burst out Peveril, waxing indignant.

"How can we? We have no proof that the dumb woman's tale is true. As long as he can assert that the child is his daughter we are powerless," argued Bouverie.

"Come in and sit down," cried Peveril, abruptly, slipping his arm in Guy's, "this sort of thing makes one hot. Might think of some plan if cooler."

"Please, sir," cried Mrs. Doidge, pursuing them into the sitting-room, her honest face full of sympathy, "here's Betty from Mr. Glasters'. She were turned away this very morning; and please, sir, can she speak a word to you?"

"Of course, of course! Fetch her in," cried Bouverie, sinking into a seat beside his old friend, and looking wisely at Guy, who stood gazing eagerly at the door, his face deathly white.

Betty came, her honest face all aglow, desperately shy at being ushered into the presence of three such fine looking gentlemen. Nor did Guy add to her self-possession, for he stepped up to her, and seizing her toll-worn hand asked, in faltering tones, if she had any news for him.

"Nay, sir," she cried, in distressed tones, the ready tears filling her eyes, "cept as how poor Miss Barb'ra went away last night, late on!"

Guy put his hand to his eyes for a minute. "Tell me what you know of her going?" he said, hoarsely.

"Not much, sir," she cried, quite upset by the sight of his trouble. "The master came just after you'd gone, and with him a nasty-looking man as he called 'Dooter.' Up they went to the mistress's room, and were there a bit. I stood in the 'all and 'eard Mrs. Bartram go to Miss Barb'ra's room, and take her back to where they was. She came out immediate—Mrs. Bartram, I mean—and walked me off to the kitchen, scolding me in her nasty, nagging way for prying. All at once a bell rang sudden, and she walked out and looked the door on me. I were mad, and tried the back door, but that was locked. So I sat and listened, and soon 'eard the sound of steps. Some one went down from the mistress's room into the old court-yard—two or three foot-steps I counted—then there was a tramping of 'orse's' coofs, the gate banged, and I 'eard no more!"

"And what after that?" cried Bouverie, for Guy was too troubled to speak.

"She came back then, and when I asked why she'd looked me in said, coolly, as the mistress and Miss Barb'ra had gone away, and she didn't want me rushing out and upsetting the young lady. I answered her back, then we had a awful row, and she told me to go first thing this morning. I was mortal glad to leave, sir, 'cause when that sweet angel were gone I felt afraid like, alone with them two devils. She told me when she paid my wage that they were going away too, to join Miss Barb'ra. And a good thing it is for the place, thinks I, for 'cept Miss Barb'ra they're a queer lot!"

She burst into tears as she ended, and sobbed violently.

Peveril and Bouverie felt embarrassed, but Guy, remembering her devotion to her young mistress, took her hand again, and looked at her kindly.

"I'm going to marry Miss Barbara when I find her, Betty," he said, gently.

"Oh, sir! are you? Well, I'm dreadful glad o' that!" cried Betty, reddening with pleasure.

"Would you like to be her servant?" went on the young man.

"I should that, sir!"

"I promise you you shall then," cried Guy, slipping a handsome gift into her hand, and dismissing her with a friendly smile.

"Stay, Betty!" cried Bouverie, following his son's example.

"And—and here, Betty!" put in Peveril, supplementing the other gifts in such a liberal style that Betty went away quite dazed.

"We must go to London!" cried Guy, marching up and down. "I'll swear he brought that doctor of his from there!"

"Ay, lad, I daresay," put in his father, doubtfully; "but it's a big place, and you'll find it hard."

He stopped suddenly, becoming aware of the fact that Peveril from behind Guy was shaking his head at him vehemently.

"Nonsense!" burst out that impetuous gentleman. "We'll set the detectives to work. Let's have a snap and be off to Plymouth to catch the evening train."

"Detectives don't seem much good in this country," remarked Bouverie, ringing the bell vigorously.

"I've never heard a word of the one I employed, Peveril!"

"Look here!" whispered his friend, hastily. "Guy'll have brain fever if he don't set to work on something. We'll all be off to London and do our best to try and find the little thing."

Bouverie saw the wisdom of his old chum's remarks, so said no more but went off in search of a time-table, while Peveril made Mrs. Dudge acquainted with their hasty plan, and ordered in luncheon.

The housekeeper, anxious to help in every way, called Sally to her aid, and in a trice had laid the table.

"Come, lad, you'll break down if you don't eat something," remonstrated Bouverie, seeing that Guy left his plate untouched, and the young man, yielding to his father's pleading expression, swallowed a few mouthfuls.

The cart came round again, James in it ready to accompany them and bring it back.

"You needn't come, James," said his master, springing up. "I'll leave it at the livery stables."

James jumped out immensely relieved; the others took their places, and Mr. Bouverie turned the horse Plymouth-wards, but pulled up short, for a man was running towards them with a yellow envelope.

"What's this, I wonder?" cried Bouverie, throwing the messenger a shilling, and tearing open the telegram.

"Come at once to this address," he read, slowly, "don't delay!"

"What address?" said Guy, impatiently. "Levison, Bulldog Inn, Mercer-street, Spitalfields. Who the devil is he?" cried Bouverie, bewildered.

"I don't know!" said Guy, hastily; "but it's London, dad, so we can easily see."

"Ay, so we can."

He thrust the telegram into his pocket, flicked the pony sharply, and away they flew on the road to Plymouth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A WOMAN SCORNEO.

THE days crept by very slowly for the poor little detective, lying in that gloomy underground hole; completely in the power of a gang of desperate men; seeing no one but the burly Boots, who came down two or three times a day to attend to his wants and bring him his meals.

Once, when he saw the man descending the ladder, he sprang up with the intention of rushing at him, overpowering him, and fighting his way out of his prison. Luckily, he glanced upwards, and his quick eyes took in the fact that the landlord Moss was standing

at the top of the steps, pointing a pistol straight at him.

He gave up the attempt then; he had no desire to die like a rat in a hole when, by biding his time, he might get out unharmed.

Besides, Boots was a very powerful looking fellow, and he, Grey, though possessing plenty of energy, was no match for such a giant.

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked, coolly, the first evening when Charley brought him his tea.

The man stood watching him, rather admiringly, for the little detective was attacking the provisions with vigour.

"Well, you are a cool chap!" exclaimed Charley, leaving his question unanswered, "eating away there, when, for all you know, we may be going to do for you this very evening."

If this pleasant speech was intended to frighten Grey, it had not the desired effect. He laughed carelessly, and repeated his question.

"What are you going to do with me?"

Charley grinned.

"I fancy you'll not be on shore this time to-morrow night," he said, mysteriously, then turned and ran up the steps.

"Humph! Agreeable that!" soliloquised Grey, listening abstractedly to the heavy thud of the trap-door. "Once they get me on board one of their cursed boats I'm done for! They would never let me go free."

The thought was not pleasant, and presently, to banish it, he rose and proceeded to do what he had done every hour to keep himself from brooding over his present uncomfortable position.

He dragged his one chair underneath the apology for a window, jumped upon it and gazed out eagerly.

He could only look into the narrow slanting yard; but the little window had long since been smashed to bits, and the faint breeze stole in and cooled his aching forehead.

Suddenly he heard voices near him, and, looking out, made out the figures of Charley and the black-ringed young lady.

They were evidently quarrelling violently, and Grey listened eagerly to catch what they were saying.

"I ask you once again!" he heard the woman cry in shrill tones. "Are you going to marry me?"

"No, I'm not," came the sullen answer.

"You promised, you villain! You know you did!"

"Yes," cried the man, with a sneering laugh, "I was a fool once, Rebecca, but I'm wiser now. I've seen a far prettier girl than you, as I can have for the asking; and I mean to have her too!"

Even in the dusk Grey could see how white the woman grew in her passion and scorn; could see how she clenched her hands as she hurled her next question at her tormentor.

"You won't marry me?" she said again, in dull tones.

"No," angrily, "I won't! Don't bother me about it again, or it'll be the worse for you!"

He flung away from her then, and marching into the house, slammed the door with more force than elegance.

"The worse for me!" hissed out Rebecca wildly. "You villain! Oh! but you shall pay for this; I'll have my revenge yet!"

She turned and paced up and down the narrow yard; and Grey, seeing a point of vantage, and seizing eagerly on it, wrote a few hurried lines on a bit of paper; and waiting till she came just by the window, threw it right at her feet.

Would she notice it and pick it up? He wondered in an agony of impatience. Yes! she had it in her hand, and was reading it intently, then, with sparkling eyes, looked towards the slit and nodded cautiously.

In another minute she had disappeared, and Grey, hearing the decisive bang she gave to the door, dropped into his chair, and rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Ha, ha! that little quotation of 'a woman scorned' works well in my case. She'll never rest till he's safely looked up. To-morrow night, my fine friend, you said, I think." Laughing softly, he threw himself back in the chair, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

Holding her precious scrap of paper tight, Rebecca hurried back to the upper part of the house, and went about her evening duties with such a will that by seven o'clock she was free to do what she liked.

Asking and obtaining permission from her master to go out for the evening, she ran up to her bedroom, put on her outdoor things, and went hastily downstairs.

She had gained the hall when Charley came out of the coffee room, and, stopping her, asked where she was off to.

"With my Aunt Josephs to the theatre," she answered, readily, a strange light in her great black eyes.

"Wish I could come with you," cried Charley, gaily, thinking, as he looked at the bright face, that she had quite got over their little dispute.

"Go and get your lovely girl to be your companion," she laughed, and, with a toss of her head, ran swiftly down the steps and away.

"After all, she's very handsome," muttered Charley, a look of pique on his coarse, discontented face, "and she has money saved. I know. I'll make it up with her when she gets back. She'll be only too glad!"

Oh, foolish man! If he could only have seen the flashing, angry eyes, and the thin, set lips of the girl who was hurrying outwards, he would not have sniggered back into the coffee-room with such a self-satisfied smile on his smug face.

Rebecca Josephs was quick and light of foot. She knew every step of the way she was going well, and her desire for revenge forced her almost into a run. So, looking neither right nor left, she sped on her way, and in an incredibly short time stood in Levison's snug little box.

With glittering eyes, blazing cheeks, and fevered lips, she told the astonished man her queer tale.

"Poor little Grey! poor little buffer!" Levison murmured, puffing away at his pipe. "I don't like meddling and telling tales, but I won't have him badly treated. He's a plucky little chap!"

"What'll you do then?" cried Rebecca, impatiently. "Will you do what he says here? telegraph to this gentleman?"

Levison took the bit of paper and read the address slowly aloud, "Bouverie, The Cottage, Meortown, Dartmoor."

"Ay, let's send a telegram now."

"But the police," cried Rebecca, "won't you let 'em know?"

Levison shook his head.

"When do they mean to take him on board?"

"Day after to-morrow, in the evening. Charley told him to-morrow; but that was only to lead him astray."

"Well, then, we'll wait for this Bouverie chap," cried Levison, suddenly. "I hates havin' anythin' to do wi' the police."

"Suppose the gentleman don't come?" asked Rebecca, excitedly.

"Why, then I'll let you know, and you can slip out to the nearest police-station. You'd better be careful, my girl," he went on hurriedly. "Let the blow come from this Mr. Bouverie. If you are suspected they'll kill you, sure as fate!"

"Yes, I know," said she, slowly; "but I don't care. However, I'll do as you say, send the telegram and wait for this gentleman's coming."

"Yes, that's safest," cried Levison.

"If the time gets late and he don't come, slip out—warn the police—there's a station close to Condor street, and come straight on here. Me and my wife will be glad to have you."

"Thank you," she said, gratefully, "you're

very kind. One thing, sir," coming close to him and laying her hand on his arm, "we mustn't let them get him on board. If they do, why he's done for, you know."

Levison laid his hand on hers and nodded vehemently.

"He shan't go! he shan't go!" he muttered, "Grey's a plucky little chap!"

"Take care of that old Dan!" she cried, turning back from the door, "he's thick with them."

"Ay, I knew that long ago," grimly; "but he'll never trouble us again, my dear. I kicked him out last night for thieving."

"Then he'll come to the 'Raven,'" she said, with conviction. "Another villain in that street!" Good night, Mr. Levison!

"Good night, my girl," cried he, coming to the door to see her off. "Be on your guard till we come."

In a minute she was off, going slower now, for she must not be in before the thieves were well over.

She detached the telegram, tore up Grey's piece of paper into minute fragments, and went on her way.

Once again, as with weary step she entered the hotel, Charley met her, and asked sweetly if she had enjoyed herself.

"Yes," she said, quietly. "I've had a pleasant evening."

"Look here, Rebecca!" he went on, sheepishly, stilling up to her and taking her hot hand. "I-I didn't mean what I said this evening. Won't you forgive me?"

She left her hand in his while she looked steadily at him; then, deciding that it was best to put him in a good humor, she smiled graciously at him, though she was longing to snatch her hand away and load him with abuse.

"Ask me in the morning," she said, coquettishly. "I won't tell you now."

She pulled her hand away then, and ran upstairs, her face pale with anger, her heart throbbing violently; while Charley, delighted with his easy conquest, walked away in a highly pleased frame of mind.

"She can't deny me!" he muttered, taking down a spirit bottle, and mixing himself a steaming glass of toddy; "but then," with a conceited laugh, "what woman can?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

TO THE RESCUE.

Along the bustling London streets, winding cleverly in and out among the never-ending stream of vehicles of all sorts, went a cab, going steadily onwards to the East end.

Inside sat the three Australians; their faces, after the night's travel, looking haggard and unwashed in the light of the brilliant summer morning.

Peveril was leaning back, a far-away expression in his kindly eyes. He had not much hope of success in this visit to London; but he would have died rather than say so to the anxious-faced young man opposite.

He was staring out with keen glance at every passer-by, almost as if he expected to see Barbara amongst the busy throng, and were holding himself ready to jump out and stop his darling.

Bouverie was spending his time in thrusting his head out of window and adjuring the man to drive faster.

"The sooner we're there the better for you," he muttered the elated Jett, who, buoyed up by visions of golden feet, touched his hat respectfully, and went along at such a rate that he just shaved the wheel of a city bus, and called down upon his devoted head a storm of angry shafts from the frate driver.

If I were to see the child in this great crowd," cried Gay, dreamily, "I should throw myself out and run after her!"

"I don't think you'd do much running," said Peveril, smiling as he scanned the busy

scene through which they were passing.

"Fancy leaping out into that turmoil!"

"Yes, indeed," echoed Bouverie, glancing out too. "London's a wonderful place."

"I wish I had come home a little sooner," remarked Peveril, after a bit, when they were driving rapidly along one of the East end streets. "I might have seen this sweet Miss Barbara then."

"I wish you had!" cried Bouverie, emphatically. "I say, Gay, you have a sketch of her," turning quickly to his silent son.

Gay reddened.

"I looked it up before I came away. I—I was afraid of losing it, and—and if such an awful thing were to happen as that I never saw the child again, that sketch, dad, would be all the consolation I had."

"Yes, that's true," muttered his father, a slightly husky feeling in his throat, and spoke no more until the cab drew up to the "Bulldog" Inn. "Now to solve the mystery!" he cried, jumping out and dismissing the driver with a fare quite beyond even his expectations.

Gay, with an impatient movement, pushed open the swing-door, and striding up to the counter, asked for "Mr. Levison."

"I am he, sir," responded the burly man whom he had addressed. "Step inside, please, gentlemen," holding open the little half-door into the bar. "I've been anxiously expecting of you."

They needed no second invitation. Soon the tiny room seemed full to overflowing; for the three visitors were magnificent specimens of manhood, and Levison himself was by no means diminutive.

"Now, my men," cried Bouverie, "tell us the meaning of your summons to us in as few words as possible, for we have much to do, and very little time to do it in."

"I won't keep you long, sir," was the quiet response, "for you'll have a tidy bit more to do when I've finished."

In utter amazement they listened to his eager tale of the little detective's dreadful snail.

"Thank you, my man," burst out Bouverie, jumping up at the conclusion of his surprising narrative. "You've done us a good turn."

"Nay!" cried Levison, honestly, "not me but Rebecca."

"She shall be well cared for," said Bouverie, hastily.

"Poor Grey!" cried Gay, in tones of compassion; "and only a day or two ago we were running him down, saying he was no use."

"Ah, if you only knewed him as well as I do, gentlemen," broke in Levison, eagerly, "you'd never have thought that. He's the pluckiest little chap anywhere, and the cleverest man in the force. Why, when once he's on a trail, he'll never leave it till he's tracked the fox to his den."

"Wonder if he's found out anything about the murder yet," said Gay, in raising tones.

Levison stared hard at him.

"Are you the gentleman as was employing him?" he asked quickly.

Bouverie nodded.

"Then get him out of where he is now, and this little chap'll take you straight to the man as did the deed!" he cried, triumphantly.

"What!" shouted Bouverie, "living in England?"

"Ay, close to you, on the Moor! I'll bet you've seen and spoken to the man before now."

Bouverie turned and looked curiously at his son, whose handsome face had suddenly become fearfully pale.

"Do you mean," he said in low tones, "unable to refrain from asking the question, 'the man Glaister?'"

"Yes," doggedly, "though that's not his proper name neither."

A groan burst from Gay's pale lips. A look of awful horror filled his dark eyes.

"Her father!" he cried, with a strong shudder.

Levison, who had been watching him anxiously, stepped forward and laid his hand on his arm.

"You're wrong," he said, slowly. "He's no more her father than I am. He never married; that dumb creature was not his wife. The housekeeper is the sister who helped him!"

"Good heavens!" shouted Bouverie, a sudden idea striking him, "the dumb woman is Maude Heriot!"

"Of course," said Levison, promptly. "Bless you! Grey had found all that out, and only waited for a little more proof before nabbing him."

"But how?" cried Gay, wonderingly. "Grey kept no watch over Glaister."

"Didn't he!" said Levison, scoffingly. "How about the old gardener at Glaister's house?"

"By Jove! yes," cried the young man, thumping the table, "what a capital get up! Why, he drove me home, and I never knew him!"

"Not likely," said Levison, with pride. "He's a capital hand at disguises. The day Glaister came up to London he travelled in the same carriage, got up as a commercial traveller, followed him to the 'Raven,' and would never have been found out if the cabman as drove him hadn't recognized him, and told my rascally old billiard marker."

"How did you find this all out, my man?" put in Peveril, respectfully.

"Oh, Rebecca picked it all up. They took his note-book from him when they dragged him, and one on 'em as is sweet on the girl let her see it."

"Why has she betrayed them?" said Bouverie, thoughtfully.

"Revenge, sir. The man's just cast her off, and she'd do anything to pay him out."

"Good for us," cried Gay, who had been looking a little happier since hearing the certain denial of Glaister's claim on Barbara.

"Did you know that he has sent the young lady away?" asked Bouverie, suddenly remembering Barbara's disappearance.

"No, sir," cried Levison, eagerly. "Why is that?"

"Because I want to make her my wife," volunteered Gay, frankly. "He has sent her away somewhere together with this poor Maude Heriot, whom he swears is mad."

"I'll be bound he's got 'em into some shady sort of private lunatic asylum!" exclaimed Levison, suddenly. "He knows he's got 'em sorted. Never mind, you just get Grey out of his prison, and you can go down and nab the villain, and force him to tell all."

"Yes, that's it," cried Peveril, jumping up, "our first action must be to liberate Grey."

"Good-bye," said Bouverie, shaking the man's hand, heartily, "we may not see you for a little time. Our first care, you know, must be to secure those two guilty wretches; but after that we shall certainly run up and express our gratitude for your aid more completely."

"Yes, and to Rebecca," added Gay, following his father. "She comes to you to-night, does she not?"

"Yes, sir. I'll take care of her; she'll want a hand to help her against those devils!"

A cab was called, they sprang into it, and were rapidly driven to Scotland yard, where, after a little delay, they were admitted to the presence of the chief. He listened with deep attention to Bouverie's rapidly told tale, jotting down a few hasty notes now and then.

"Many thanks, Mr. Bouverie, for your opportune aid," he said, after a moment's thought. "Our men, as a rule, report themselves here regularly while investigating any important case. Grey did so only when he paid that visit to the 'Bulldog.' I have not been uneasy though; for often when working in disguise it is impossible to communicate with us. You say he is to be removed to-night?"

Bouverie bowed. The chief touched a small



[LEVINSON TOOK THE BIT OF PAPER AND READ IT SLOWLY.]

bell sharply, and, a clerk appearing, asked, quickly,—

"Brunton, when's high tide to-night?"

"Eleven, sir," was the prompt reply.

"That will do."

The man withdrew, and the chief sat thinking deeply for a few minutes, while his three visitors watched his face anxiously.

"I see a way to catch the whole bright lot," he said, presently. "High tide at eleven means that they will take Grey away about eight. I shall send my men to be on the spot about that time, and pounce on them as they are smuggling him out."

"Not before?" ventured Bouverie, thinking of the little detective's state of anxiety.

"No," decisively. "It is just what Grey himself would wish. Should the officers go earlier, and force their way into the house, the whole crew might manage to get away through some of those convenient trap-doors."

"Then eight o'clock in Condor-street," said Guy, eagerly. "We may be there too, I suppose?"

The chief smiled.

"Yes, as long as you keep out of sight. But on the whole I think 'twould be better to be on the spot by seven-thirty. Those slippery rascals might take it into their heads to leave earlier."

"We will!" cried Peveril, emphatically.

Then with a courteous bow the chief dismissed them, and they found themselves once more in the bright sunshine, gazing abstractedly at the busy passers-by.

"What shall we do?" asked Guy, excitedly.

"Go to an hotel, have a wash and a good dinner, and make the best of our way to Condor-street. I mean to be there before seven-thirty," said Bouverie.

"Right you are," agreed Peveril. "The rascals shan't escape if we three men can help it!"

"I'd like to see them," growled Guy, a dangerous light in his handsome eyes.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE QUEEN'S NAME!

RESTED and refreshed by a good wash, and a capital dinner at a first-class hotel, they turned their steps towards Condor-street, and knowing they were in excellent time—for the great clock at St. Paul's was just booming out the half hour after six as they passed it—they went very leisurely on their way, looking about them; Peveril and Bouverie with the eager excited air of Englishmen who had been exiled from the great city for many a long year, and Guy—seeing its mighty streets and buildings for the first time—with an expression of satisfied appreciation.

At last they reached Condor-street, and, walking cautiously along it, caught sight in time of the dingy hotel they were seeking.

"Here's luck!" said Peveril, excitedly.

"Why, there's a tea and cocoa room just opposite!"

"By Jove, yes!" exclaimed Bouverie.

"Excellent! excellent! We must separate and stroll in one after the other."

"Or two first and one alone?" suggested Guy.

His suggestion was promptly adopted. Peveril and Guy going first, and Bouverie following in a few minutes.

A dismal-faced woman took their orders, hurrying away gladly for the supply of hot coffee that was demanded.

"Trade good here?" asked Bouverie, politely, laying down a ten-shilling piece, and telling the astonished female never to mind the change.

"No, indeed, sir!" she cried in injured tones when she had inundated him with thanks. "That nasty hotel quite spoils my business! I 'ate the whole horrid lot that lives there!"

"May we sit here awhile and smoke our pipes?" asked Peveril, politely, his eyes wandering towards the window.

"Which indeed you can!" cried the gratified dame. "Perhaps you'd like the window open a bit. 'Tis a horrid close night!"

"Thanks, yes. Ah! allow me, ma'am."

He hurried forward and raised the sash cautiously; then, the woman having left them to attend to a new customer, the three amateur spies drew their chairs close up to the window, and concentrated their gaze on the opposite building.

Presently a small, sharp faced boy strolled along, whistling carelessly, and ran up the steps of the hotel. He carried a parcel looking suspiciously like boots, and on reaching the door gave two quick pulls at the bell.

(To be continued.)

A PENNY BANK is to be established in Beard Schools by means of post-office stamp saving slips, which will be collected by the officials who will in due course open accounts in the Post Office Savings Bank on behalf of the little ones whose "ideas" have not only been taught how to "shoot," but also how to save. It is sincerely to be hoped the scheme will meet with all possible encouragement at the hands of the managers and teachers of the various schools.

A VERY admirable and exemplary scheme is reported from Germany, and one which is eminently practicable, although it did not originate in the erratic mind of the Kaiser. It is that men imprisoned for assaults upon their wives and children are not to be continuously kept in useless confinement, to the possible starvation of those dependent on them; but on leaving work on Saturday the man is each week kept in custody until the following Monday, which process is repeated until, with holidays, he has expiated his sentence of a fortnight or a month, as the case may be. I have an idea that such a system will also prove more deterrent than any other.



[PENELOPE SHOT FROM DENIS' SIDE, AND RAN SWIFTLY IN THE DIRECTION OF THE HOTEL.]

PRETTY PENELOPE.

CHAPTER I.

PENELOPE Desborough stood in front of the big window that faced the dull grey sea, a sea broken here and there with flicks and streaks of frothy white marking the waves as the tide rolled out over the rough beach. Penelope's face was disconsolate and weary, and Penelope's very pretty nose was pressed so hard against the window pane as to threaten permanent annihilation to the delicate lines and structure which constituted its beauty. She stared dully at the dismal scene, at the heavy monotonous sky, at the wet parade in front of the small hotel, at the deserted beach and the sullen sea.

A voice from a corner spoke to her once, twice, before she woke from her dissatisfied self-communion. Penelope withdrew her nose reluctantly from its resting place on the window; it had a numb sensation as though it had gone to sleep or was broken off; she felt it carefully with her small hand while she replied to the questioning voice, listlessly—

"Raining? of course it's raining. Does it ever do anything else? Listen. Did you ever hear such a deluge? It's pouring cats and dogs." She moved the end of her nose about with her slim fingers; it was beginning to tingle, and it felt very uncomfortable. Penelope's anger increased. "And this is summer!" she cried, shrilly. "August, you call this," with an emphasis of absolute indignation. "You call this August!"

"I don't know that I am wholly responsible for the christening of this particular month," the voice answered, softly. It was a pleasant voice, but a trifle languid, as though the mere exertion of speaking one word was too much for it. "Still," after a moment's pause, as though the subject had required and received much thought, "still, it's not a bad name, as well call it August as not, I

don't object; and then it saves so much trouble, the old name. If one had to rack one's brains to think of another, one might—"

Penelope turned her back on the speaker with a movement that was decided if not a little rude.

"I hate you, Denis!" she declared, savagely, still encouraging her nose to return to its normal condition. "Not content with having suggested our coming down to this abominable place,"—no amount of description could give adequate weight to the force of Miss Desborough's expression on this particular word—"not content with this, you take the greatest delight in making yourself as beastly as you know how; and though," glancing back for a moment with contempt, "I don't give you credit for success in many things, I will say that in the matter of being beastly and disagreeable, and—and all that, you certainly are unrivalled!"

The voice laughed very softly.

"What a very bad temper you are in to-day to be sure," it said in the same languid lazy tone.

Penelope bent her brows, and looked out again at the lowering sky. She vouchsafed no remark.

"Exactly what you were when you were a little tot of a thing not as high as this chair. Gad! how you used to flare out at one. You positively frightened one."

"I wish I could frighten you now," the girl cried, hotly; then she turned round swiftly, with a quick, graceful movement, she crossed the room, whipped the book out of his hold and threw it violently into a corner, and, taking the collar of the rough tweed coat into her two small hands, she essayed to shake the contents of the same said coat with all her might and main.

Denis Latimer lay back in the chair tranquilly, his handsome grey eyes, full of sleepy amusement, resting on the girl's flushed face. He might have been out out of rock for all the impression her exertions made upon him.

"Better give it up for to-day, Pen," said his voice, not one whit less soft or lazy. "Thirteen stone takes a lot of moving, and I have put on weight since I have been down here."

Penelope released him as swiftly as she had attacked him.

"You are odious, odious!" she said, half in earnest, and yet with a smile creeping round the corners of her mouth.

She stood before him, her bosom heaving a little from her exertions, her arms crossed defiantly, her figure drawn up to its full height. Her dark hair had become loosened and fell roughly about her throat and brows.

Denis Latimer looked at her steadily from between his half-closed eyelids.

She was very fair to look on. She had always given promise of great attraction from her earliest babyhood; that promise, the young man decided quietly, had been more than fulfilled.

The half laughing, half pouting expression sat well on her proud delicate features, and as for her eyes, the deep dark blue of the heavens, as he had seen them at night many a time when far out in the middle of the ocean, was the nearest approach to the colour of Penelope's big earnest eyes he could think of.

"You are the most unattractive tiresome prig I have ever come across," she said, as he made no remark to her former uncomplimentary epithet. "One might as well be shut up in a dungeon with a fossil. Why can't you talk—say something? You have got a voice, use it."

"Dear Penelope," the murmur was almost plaintive, "it is not good manners for two people to talk at once."

"Which means—" wrathfully demanded Penelope.

"Which means, my dear, that you talk so much there is no chance for anyone else, absolutely none."

Quick as lightning, Penelope's small brown hand flew out and administered a hearty

slap on Mr. Latimer's bronzed cheek. That done, she blushed a fiery red. He would have been astonished at that, and at the sudden look that came over her pretty face, could he have seen them, but she hid herself hurriedly on a corner of the table and her back was turned to him.

"I hope that relieved you," Denis said, in exactly the same unaffected fashion as before; then all at once he sat up.

"Go and get your hat and a shawl—oh! well, a waterproof or a mackintosh, or whatever you call it; we will go out. Exercise is necessary for such a spirited nature as yours. A good hour's walk will perhaps take the edge off, and make you better tempered." The last was said slyly; but Penelope was already a sunbeam, she had danced to the door.

"Dear, dear Denis, you are an angel," she cried. "I love you. I have been dying to go out. I don't mind the rain, but none of the chaps would go, and mamma is as silly she will not let me put my nose out of doors by myself. In two minutes—two minutes, Denis, dear."

Left to himself, Denis rose to his full height, which was something a little over six feet, shook himself, yawned, walked to the window, looked out, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"Cheerful prospect," he said to himself, and then he smiled. "Poor little Pen—it is hard on her—how she does love the sun. She is only a baby," Denis walked to the door. "Only a baby, but—" as he ran swiftly down the stairs, "she's a dancin' pretty baby, and that's the honest truth!"

A perfect storm of wind and rain met the two as they sallied out of the hotel. Penelope gasped, and bent her head like a flower beneath the breeze. She was clad in a neat sensible ulster buttoned from throat to ankle, and her feet, shod in a stout pair of boots, showed trim and shapely as the wind swept the thick cloth closely about her as though it were so much gossamer.

Rough and wild as it was, she was happy, and once they had breasted the corner they found it calmer, and could walk and talk with ease.

"Now you are really nice," Penelope said, condescendingly. "This is what you ought to be all the time. You don't know how dull you can be, Denis."

"Don't I?" the young man laughed. "I think I have a very shrewd opinion I do, my dear young friend!"

Penelope danced a little in the wind.

"I was longing for something or somebody to come down. I have been so dreadfully bored with Lucie and Walter. Edged people are horrible, they seem as if they must always have something to say to one another in whispers; and then, if you happen to go out of the room and leave them together, you feel as if you were doing something terrible when you go back again. They look quite murderous!"

Denis laughed.

"It is evident you are not sentimental, Pen."

She laughed and shook her head emphatically.

"That I am not. I am as different from Lucie as chalk is from cheese. Mamma often says she doesn't know who I take after. I am not a bit like either papa or she is! Lucie is the very image of mamma, isn't she? and they have enough sentiment for a dozen people. Why, do you know how much Lucie and Walter will have to live on when they are married?"

Denis looked down in the blue depths of her eyes and shook his head.

"Three hundred a year. Imagine! only three hundred a year! Why, it would hardly keep a fly, Denis."

"Where did you get your worldly wisdom and your practical knowledge Pen?"

Penelope kicked a pebble in front of her, musingly.

"I don't know, I think it is born in me,"

she said; "and Aunt Julia has preached at me about sentiment and its follies till I think I know them all by heart."

"Ah, I forgot you had been so much with Mrs. Rochdale."

Denis Latimer's brows were a little contracted; his voice was no longer soft, it was extremely dry.

"Don't you like Aunt Julia?" queried Penelope. "She is very fond of you, and—" and then Penelope stopped and blushed. She was about to add quite simply, as though stating an ordinary fact, "and so is Marcia," but she pulled herself up in time.

Honesty, honour, and straightforwardness were among Penelope's best qualities, and she realised in a second that it would have been unfair to her cousin, Marcia, Rochdale, to have mentioned the evident partiality that young lady had for Mr. Denis Latimer.

If Denis were sharp enough to notice and understand her abrupt termination, he of course did not let her see anything of this. He was, as a matter of fact, perfectly aware of the interest and affection he inspired in the breasts of Mrs. Rochdale and her handsome daughter. It was the sort of interest he inspired in the breasts of most ambitious mothers and marriageable daughters. He was used to it, it was nothing new.

"Mrs. Rochdale is very kind," was all he said; "and very clever," he added.

"Oh, do you think so really—really, Denis?" the girl asked. "Now I know it is the proper thing to call Aunt Julia clever; but do you know I don't really think she is—she is so shallow, so much on the surface. She talks well," Penelope said, as she pulled up her coat collar high about her pretty ears, "but I have always the sort of idea, Denis, that if you began to argue with her—" Denis laughed quickly.

"Heaven forbid! fancy arguing with Mrs. Rochdale!"

"It's such fun when she and mamma begin," Penelope said, her whole face radiant with her amusement called up by this thought. What a baby she was, and even a prettier baby seen out in the dull daylight with the wet wind stinging her cheeks into an exquisite colour, and the storm blowing her curls about those two blue eyes.

Denis turned his face resolutely away out to sea; something, he scarcely knew what, made him frown suddenly.

"Don't make fun of your mother, Pen," he said, almost shortly. "Is it—"

"Not make fun of mamma?" the girl echoed. "Why, Denis, what other amusement have I?"

At this absolutely naïve question Denis Latimer broke into a hearty and irrepressible laugh.

"Oh, Pen! Pen!" was all he could say; but he grew earnest very quickly.

"And is amusement all you care for?" he asked, a curious tone coming into his voice; "nothing better, nothing higher, Pen?"

Penelope looked at him in astonishment, and then she turned her head away sharply.

"Oh, Denis! don't get priggish, just as I am enjoying myself so much. I can't think why everybody always wants to spoil everything with stupid questions. Of course I care for lots of things. Sometimes—sometimes—with quite an aggrieved air, "I think you take me for a silly stupid schoolgirl, and you know I am not a schoolgirl now, I am eighteen next month."

"Quite a woman!" Denis said, with a smile at the pouting lips; but there was a shade on his brow, and a strange look round his clean-shaven lips.

"Well, I am afraid you have not too much amusement here, little Pen," he said, in his ordinary tone, after a moment's pause.

"You are my only source of joy. When you go," she shrugged her shoulders.

"I am a very dull source of joy, I am afraid."

"Well, you are sometimes," the girl confessed, candidly; "when, for instance, you

will persist in taking mamma out for a constitutional every morning. Of course, it is very nice and very courteous and all that; but it is so stupid for me!"

Denis turned sharply. This was not the first time by several during the past week that he had been struck silent with amazement at some such expression of intense egotism from the lips of this girl, who had seemed to him, when he had first seen her, the living embodiment of everything that was beautiful, gentle and sweet in dawning womanhood.

"Penelope," he said, suddenly, "do you know that is a very selfish speech? Do—do you know I am afraid you are a wee bit selfish?"

Penelope shrugged her shoulders again.

"Am I?" she said, indifferently. "Yes, I believe I am. A very good thing too. One must be selfish to get on in this world, Denis."

The young man walked on mechanically; her calm, pretty voice, so delicate and musical, rang in his ears like discordant notes. A new sensation was in his heart, something akin to pain, to disappointment. It was not a vague sensation, it was definite, and it deepened each step he took.

He glanced at Penelope; the girl was humming a familiar tune; her face was as sweet and innocent as a child's, her big blue eyes, in which he had imagined such wondrous and possible emotions, the first time he had gazed into them, met his now quite fearlessly, as though the sentiment she had just expressed had been one of the noblest and highest the human heart could hold.

"Poor Denis, how shocked you look. You don't like the truth, I see!"

"I don't like some truths," the young man answered, shortly.

Penelope ceased whistling after a moment. She seemed to be perfectly indifferent to the change that had come perceptibly over her companion. She slipped her little hand through his arm.

"Look, Denis!" she cried, joyfully, "there is a break in that cold dull sky. Look! I can see the tiniest bit of blue. The sun is going to shine. Hurrah, how lovely. We can have that day's fishing you promised me to-morrow after all."

Denis shook his head quietly, and let her hand slip from his arm. He did not know how it was his voice was so calm and steady as he answered her; for that light touch, that brief contact with the warm living beauty of her presence, had sent the blood coursing like fire through his veins, had made his heart thrill and leap as it had never done before in all his life.

He felt as though he were some other person in that brief delicious moment.

"I have promised to drive Mrs. Desborough into London, you know," he said.

He did not look at her as he spoke.

"Mamma! Mamma! can wait," Penelope cried, imperiously.

"How dare you suggest any such thing! fancy putting mamma before me. Of course you are only in fun, Denis—you can't possibly mean such a thing!"

There was a hot flash on her cheeks, a little indecision in her voice—the indecision of amazed anger.

Denis came to a full stop in the middle of the wet road. The wind and rain beat upon them. He looked very tall in his long loose mackintosh. His handsome face was pale; and there was a quiet stern look about his mouth and in those steel grey eyes which were fixed on Penelope.

"I think it is I who must ask you that question, Penelope," he said, and his voice too was not quite steady. "Of course you are not in earnest when you suggest that your mother's pleasure, the pleasure of your invalid suffering mother," with emphasis and distinction in each word, "must be second to you. You are speaking in fun, are

you not, Penelope? You could not possibly mean such a thing, really."

A gust of wind made Penelope bend her head, but she raised it almost immediately. The hot colour had gone from her cheeks, and in her beautiful blue eyes there was a curious look, cold, hard, fixed.

"I am not in the least in fun, Denis," she answered, quietly. "I am quite in earnest. I think most certainly I ought to come before mamma or before any one. I am the most important person in the world to myself. How silly of you to make such a fuss about what is a most ordinary thing. Mamma is old, she has had her day. I am young, and I have had nothing yet. Why must I give up to mamma? I don't see it at all. I think I should be extremely foolish, and I don't suppose I should get in the least thanked for my sacrifice. Do you want to stand here any longer? It is not pleasant, the mud happens to be deeper than usual in this particular spot."

Denis Latimer gazed down at the beautiful young face beside him, at first in a state of utter bewilderment. She had spoken not quickly or hotly. Each word was uttered clearly and sweetly, and her lips were smiling as she finished.

Denis woke from his bewilderment and instinctively recoiled from her. She was very lovely, very young and fascinating, but the realisation of her supreme egoism suddenly destroyed her beauty for him altogether.

Denis Latimer had very strong views about women. They should be human angels, he determined, fragile and not absolutely guileless, of course, for humanity must sin; but a woman's wrongdoing in his eyes was something that should arise out of her very goodness, too much tenderness of heart, too much weakness. He did not admire saints, but woman as a woman in the ideal was something he had always revered and worshipped, encouraged to do this by the fact of his having had a mother who combined in a rare manner most of the beauties, mental and personal, which could fall to the lot of any living being.

Penelope's frank heartlessness amazed him into silence, and then—well, then Denis had to turn away his eyes from her face, and set his heel at it were on some delicate new-born thing in his heart.

He was horribly shocked, bitterly disappointed. Not until this moment, when disappointment was so real, did he understand what a difference had come over his life in the last week, the week he had spent with the Dashboroughs, in which he had renewed an acquaintance with Penelope, whom he had not seen since her baby days, and strengthened the sincere affection with which her mother had always regarded him.

It had been such a pleasant, happy, merry week. Denis had wondered once or twice vaguely why he had found so much enjoyment in this primitive little coast village, with nothing to recommend it but a certain amount of rough comfort at the hotel, and a magnificent sea that broke on the beach with all the assurance and mimic magnitude of Atlantic waves.

He had not quite understood, wherein so much enjoyment had exactly lain; he knew it now—know it with a glad gleam of delight, no rush of hot, wild joy; the blossom of his love must be crushed, ere it could break into a flower. It had crept unconsciously, unexpectedly into his heart. It could be easily swept away if he set his mind to it, and easily be forgotten.

All this flashed through his brain as he stood there a moment in silence, gazing at the lovely little face before him with her big honest-looking eyes, and her innocent smile; then he turned away his face seawards, and deliberately shut his gaze from her beauty.

"We will walk on if you wish," he said, very coldly, very stiffly, "but it seems to me the mud will not improve as we progress,

and the wind and rain are worse than I imagined when we came out."

"Oh! if you are frightened," Penelope said, contemptuously, "please go back. I don't want to make you do anything you don't like. The wind and the rain and the mud can't hurt me!"

She began walking on swiftly as she spoke, and naturally Denis followed her.

They progressed a little way in silence, when Penelope looked back over her shoulder.

"Frankly," she said, in that cool decisive way of hers, "frankly, I would much rather you left me. You have developed a very bad temper all at once, for no earthly reason that I can see, and you are spoiling my enjoyment. I would prefer to walk by myself."

"Your mother objects to your walking alone," Denis replied, in the same cold tone.

Penelope shrugged her shoulders and stamped her foot; then all at once she stopped and thrust her hands into her ulster pockets.

"Well, she has made no stipulation about my running," she said, quietly and defiantly, and with that she shot from his side like an arrow from a bow, and ran swiftly through the mud in the direction of the hotel.

Denis stood where she had left him, gazing after the graceful flying figure.

"She is an enigma," he said to himself, and then, as he turned and breathed the wind again, he added, savagely, "I wish I had never met her. From my heart I wish I had never seen her!"

Denis Latimer was about to discover that love, once it rears its delicate head in the human breast, may be crushed down violently, vigorously; but there is pain, bitter pain in the act, and the wound that lingers is long in healing, sometimes it never heals at all.

CHAPTER II.

PENELOPE arrived at the hotel breathless and mud-splashed. Her face was flushed from her long run, but as she unbuttoned her wet ulster and left it below to dry, and began mounting the stairs to her own room, the colour faded absolutely out of her cheeks, and she looked very white and very tired, with a sudden strained look in the blue eyes.

She shut her door and turned the key, then tossing her cap on to the bed she sat down in an arm-chair, put her elbows on her knees, and buried her chin in her hands.

"I think I have done it effectually this time," she said to herself. She moved a little to and fro as she sat lost in her thoughts, as though the burden of these thoughts was sharp and bitter and gave her pain. "How his eyes looked at me! How he despises me!" she said, in a low, quiet voice to herself. "I had no idea that eyes could look so terrible. Well!"

—with a short mirthless laugh—"well, I need not trouble myself so very much. I don't suppose they will care to look at me any more. I understood to-day what Aunt Julia meant when she said Denis Latimer would never be trifled with," she laughed again in the same disheartened fashion. "After all," she said, with an attempt at recklessness, "what do I care? I said I hated him before he came. I said I should let him see that Penelope Dashborough, poor nonentity as I am, was not quite the same as all the rest. He considers himself a sort of king. What he says must be said; what he likes must be liked. Don't I know how they all, Aunt Julia and everybody, wish to do the smallest thing he wants. I hated it then when I did not know him, but now—" Penelope rose and walked aimlessly about the room—"now I hate him worse than ever!" There was a hot flush on her face again; she walked to the window and looked out deliberately. "I have given him something to think about. Of course he is shocked, and I did it all so well. I—I had no idea I could act so well."

The girl stood staring out at the wet road. In the distance she could see Denis Latimer's

tail form coming back from his walk. Penelope turned away suddenly and took a photograph standing on her table. It was the picture of a sweet, delicate woman, who bore a faded likeness to the girl's fresh beauty.

"And I said beastly things about you, my darling, my angel mother. Yes, for whom I would give my last drop of blood if it would do you any good. No wonder he was shocked!" Penelope was smiling, but there were tears in her eyes. "It must have sounded horrid—horrid, my darling!" She pressed her lips to the picture, then put it down and reentered herself in her chair. "I hope he will go away to-morrow. I wish he would go to-night," a curious dull ache crept into her heart as she thought this wish. "Oh! he is sure to go soon. He only came to stay two days. He has been a week, and his yacht is all right again now. There is nothing to keep him. I know mamma is quite astonished he is staying so long; but how pleased she is. Poor darling! she does love to be remembered, and he has been very good,"—she stared down at her little mud-splashed boots—"as good as though she had been his own mother. How astonished Aunt Julia would be if she could see the great Denis Latimer playing cavalier to her poor invalid sister. She would be jealous, too, I expect, and very angry." Penelope moved her feet about on the carpet uncertainly. "She considers us such nobodies. I soon found that out when I was staying with her this year. I suppose we are nobodies. Poor women have no place in the world; they ought to be destroyed. I am sure that to one of Aunt Julia's theories. Goodness! how she does hate poor people. To hear her talk you would think mamma had committed a crime when she married papa—a poor creature—in- stead of choosing a rich banker like Mr. Richdale; and Marcia, too!"

Penelope flung herself back in her chair, and put her arms under her head.

Marcia is very like Aunt Julia; but she is so handsome, one can forgive her a great deal. Denis would be surprised, I expect, if he could know how much of his character I have learnt from my cousin—Marcia Richdale. What stories of his life, his yachting tours, his success, his personal charm, his wealth, the title that will come to him some day. It used to sound like the history of a prince in a fairy story." Penelope's eyes were dreamy and soft. "I liked hearing about him at first; but afterwards—afterwards"—the dreaminess went out of her eyes, and they grew brilliant—"when I saw what folly they were capable of doing because of this one young man and his big fortune, I did not care any more for the story. I almost hated his name. How angry I got with Marcia, to be sure. How furious I was that day" when she said so calmly, "Denis Latimer goes in fear of his life for the poor girls who are ready to pounce on him if he speaks a civil word; or in the least degree pleasant to one of them." She, of course, imagines he means to marry her. "I notice he is awfully cool to most girls; naturally he has to be careful. He could be snipped up in a moment. Denis is ambitious for all his wealth, and I am sure he will be very particular in his choice of a wife; so if ever you should meet him down at Latimer Court, and of course he will be there at odd times, don't set your cap at him, Cousin Pen; for you will only waste your time I assure you."

"Oh!" Penelope brought her arms down from her head suddenly. "I think I could have killed Marcia when she said that to me. She was frightened when she saw my look, and tried to turn it off with a laugh; but I knew she was not in fun, she meant to hurt me; she does not like me, and she was glad of a chance of saying something like that. If it were not so silly, I should believe that Marcia was jealous because our home happens to be in the village where Denis Latimer's big house is; but surely she cannot be quite so mean—and then she knows we have been there for years; ever since papa died; and in

all this time, Denis has scarcely once been at the Court. I don't think Maria need have any jealousy about me in future; if—*if* Denis Latimer took the smallest interest in me and," a rich colour crept over her cheeks, "and I almost think he did at first, I have effectually destroyed that interest—for ever—for ever."

She sat with her eyes shut for awhile. "It was an inspiration," she said, when she opened them and rose from the chair. "If I had not happened to hear him talking with mamma that night, it might have been difficult how to act, but immediately I knew his views and opinions on women I got my cue. Whatever his thoughts of me were at first, and dear mother must have given him her version of my character, I don't think Denis Latimer will have any doubts about me now. I have made myself a beast in his eyes!" Penelope began unbuttoning her boots, her fingers were trembling from the excitement of her thoughts. "Yes a perfect beast, the sort of girl he most despises. Well," kicking the boots into a far corner, "I am glad of it; at least he can never say that Penelope Desborough was one of the thousands of poor unfortunate girls who fought with all their might and main to get possession of his handsome person and his handsome self!"

She walked hurriedly to and fro, taking off her wet dress, which she realised for the first time was wet, and replacing it with a soft pink-hued gown, which enhanced her delicate skin and lit up the blue of her eyes to perfection.

Once she stopped in her toilette: a man's voice was speaking outside.

"Oh! I'm all right, Mrs. Desborough. Wet? Yes, just a little; but that's nothing. Miss Penelope is changing her things. You have had a good hour's sleep: come, that is capital, we will have a pleasant evening—my last evening, I am sorry to say; have just had a wire, I must rush off to-morrow, but I will tell you all that at dinner."

Penelope's hands trembled. Going—he was going to-morrow. In a few short hours he would be gone. The colour left her face, her lips, even her eyes.

"I am glad. I am glad," she cried to herself, bravely.

But her heart said otherwise.

(To be continued.)

JASPER PALLISER'S GRANDDAUGHTER.

CHAPTER IX.

OPONENTS.

It was a terribly embarrassing moment to all assembled.

Nella started back, and grew pale and red alternately, her eyes fixed with an expression of mingled horror, astonishment, and reproach on Jim; he staring blankly at her with the utmost consternation and dismay written on every lineament of his countenance.

Mr. Howard looked from one to the other with an air of one who feels a crisis has been arrived at, and is eager to see the effects of it; and Mr. Parker, his grey hair all ruffled, and his spectacles pushed up on his forehead, stood dumbfounded, the picture of bewilderment and chagrin.

Gradually Nella's face changed, the look of surprise and reproach faded out of it, and was replaced by one of haughty contempt.

"This—this Mr. Rogers and I have indeed met before—Mr. Parker," she said, icily; "but I had no idea—Mr. Rogers, and she laid an emphasis on the name, never gave Lady Vane nor me any reason to imagine who he was, or that he was going about the world under an assumed name."

Jim Rogers started, and his face flushed.

"Pardon me, Miss Danvers, that name is the only one I have ever been known by, and—*and* no one can be more astonished, confounded, than I am to discover who you are. I had not the vaguest idea that—"

Nella laughed scornfully. "Oh, sir! you must surely have been aware that the late Mr. Jasper Palliser's granddaughter—"

"I knew Mr. Jasper Palliser had a granddaughter, but I was ignorant of her name. I—*I* assure you on my word of—"

—began Jim.

Nella waived her hand deprecatingly.

"Oh! spare me—spare yourself further excuses," she said; "you come all the way from Australia—at least, have you come from Australia? You said so, I remember, and angry as she was, her eyes fell before the indignant flash from his. It may be so, of course, but you can hardly hope I shall believe you were ignorant of the name of the person who is now in possession of the estate you came to claim."

"I was," cried Jim. "I—since I arrived in England I have seen Mr. Howard but once I have neglected my business since I—"

"He has," interrupted Mr. Howard. "He knew nothing of what had taken place since Mr. Palliser's death, though the public papers made him aware of the death itself, and—"

"I was quite ignorant of who you were, or that the estate and you were in any way connected," put in poor Jim; "and you never mentioned it, nor Mr. Palliser's name—nor gave me any reason to suppose—"

"It was improbable I should talk of my private affairs to an entire stranger of whom I knew nothing," put in Nella, haughtily, growing every moment more and more angry. "Everyone knows me—everyone knows who I am; anyone could have told you—"

"Yes, but you forget I am a stranger," he answered, quickly. "The Acoringtons, my only friends, I have not seen since the day I first met you. But—*but* why are you so angry? Ah!" as Nella smiled bitterly, "of course, you look on me in a very unfriendly light, as one about to try and take from you—"

"You can hardly expect me to say I am charmed at the advent of one who pretends to have a title to my property," returned Nella, "or that I believe you to be—"

"I see, you believe me to be an impostor," broke in poor Jim; "that is hard to bear—a cruel thing to say! I wish—I wish, if I could have known, have dreamt—"

"It seems to me this is a matter for our lawyers to settle," said Nella, very coldly, and seemingly quite unmoved by Jim's very apparent agitation. "Naturally, had I known—had we known that you were the person who—of whom Mr. Parker wrote to me some weeks ago, we should not have desired your acquaintance. Why you forced yourself on us I do not know. I suppose you had some end in view, though—"

"Miss Danvers, you are unjust, cruelly unjust!" cried Jim, hotly. "I was perfectly unaware you were the present owner of the Palliser property when I met you. I had no end in view such as you hint at when I followed you to Brighton. Had I had any, the smallest idea, you were my cousin—"

"Your cousin! Oh! this is too much!" said Nella, with the most cutting scorn. "I do not recognise the relationship, Mr. Rogers—if Rogers is your name; neither in future shall I acknowledge you as an acquaintance. It is atrocious, insulting, an unheard of piece of insolence to claim—"

"My dear young lady, hush! hush! gently," interposed Mr. Parker, soothingly. "It is!" cried Nella. "My cousin! it is insulting—the height of audacity. You—you yourself told me that this man," and she pointed to Jim, "was a fraud—an impostor like the others—trying to get from me what was mine, trying to rob me, just as any

other thief would! Did you not tell me so?" and Nella's voice faltered.

"I did, my dear Miss Nella; but it is best not to use hard words. You see—"

And he stopped and hesitated.

"I see before me a man who has deceived and imposed on me," cried Nella, "and who had positively succeeded in making me, in making us, like him and think well of him. Now—now I know all—oh! how odious, how despicable does he appear."

And she turned away with a gesture of disdain and disgust.

"Come, Rogers, we'd better go," said Mr. Howard to Jim in a low voice, "we can do no good here."

And he touched Jim's arm, who was standing, his eyes fixed on Nella with an indignant, reproachful, sorrowful look in them.

Jim started.

"I can't go, and—*and* let her believe me an impostor, Howard," he said, feelingly.

"That, my dear fellow, is a point the law will speedily settle," answered Howard, glancing at Nella, who had sunk into a chair, looking white and overcome.

"I—I really think, as there is nothing more to be said just now about this, Mr. Howard," put in Mr. Parker, significantly, "it would be best for all parties if you would take your client away for the present, eh?"

"Just so," he replied. "Come on, Jim. Good day, Mr. Parker."

And bowing ceremoniously to Nella, who took not the slightest notice of his salutation, he turned to go.

But Jim strode across the room to where Nella sat.

"You have been unjust and very cruel to me to-day, Miss Danvers," he said, in a harsh choked voice; "but you shall do me justice yet, and acknowledge that you have wronged me."

Nella bowed with a smile of cold disdain.

Jim turned from her abruptly, and followed Mr. Howard from the room.

"A terribly awkward meeting. I felt for you, Rogers," he said; "but, my dear fellow, how was it you didn't know? I distinctly remember mentioning Miss Danvers's name to you at our first interview."

"Did you? I—I suppose I wasn't attending," said poor Jim, simply. "Just fancy, she being my cousin! though she repudiated the relationship with such scorn. She, my opponent in this suit! How strange! how unfortunate!"

Howard looked at him curiously.

"A pretty girl," he said, carelessly.

"Miss Danvers is more than pretty," answered Jim, stiffly, and colouring suddenly. "And, by jove! she is the sweetest and best of girls. I—I hardly know what to do now, Howard."

"What to do! what do you mean, my dear fellow?" asked Howard, in a tone of surprise.

"I mean, I've a good mind to give it up—to drop the suit—to let her keep the estate!" he answered, moodily.

"Let her keep the estate! Give up your birthright! Give up thousands a-year! and why? Don't be a fool, my dear boy—don't let a woman's pretty face be your undoing. Ah! I've learned your secret, my dear boy; you're a poor hand at hiding your feelings. Believe me, there's only one thing for you to do. Go on, and win the suit. If you drop it now, why, she and all the rest of the world will then certainly put you down as an impostor—no doubt as to that. Ha, ha! I laugh when I think of old Parker's face to-day. I never saw a fellow so utterly flabbergasted. Now, you've the game in your own hands, don't be a fool, Jim; take what is yours by right. You are much better fitted to be the owner of a large property than a girl like that is. She'll marry some day, and, ten to one, some impetuous lordling who will take her for her money, and practically, if you give up, you will be giving him the estate, not her—don't you see? For Heaven's sake," he added, for a certain expression in

Jim's face frightened him, "don't do anything rash; promise me you'll think over it well, and consult me before taking any steps. Promise me, now."

"Well," replied Jim, after a pause. "I—I promise you I'll consider well what I'm about, Howard; but oh! how can I rob her—"

"You are not robbing her, it's she who's robbing you, my dear fellow," began Howard.

"Well, but she'll always think of me as having robbed her. She'll hate and loathe me, Howard, for ever," he answered, gloomily.

"Well! and suppose she does," returned Howard, impatiently, "what then? Will it much matter?"

But a look from Jim told him plainly enough not only that it did matter, but that to him it seemed to matter more than anything else in the whole world.

No sooner had Jim Rogers and Mr. Howard quitted Mr. Parker's office than Nella, whose feelings had been worked up to an uncontrollable pitch, burst into tears, much to Mr. Parker's dismay.

"My dear young lady—my dear Miss Nella, don't—don't!" he said, soothingly; "pray, pray, calm yourself. They are gone, they will not come back. There is no reason to take it so much to heart, believe me."

"But I can't help it. I am very silly—very weak, I know," sobbed Nella; "but it's been such a shock to find that—"

"O! course it's been a shock, but don't worry yourself," put in Mr. Parker.

"I never could have credited—have believed that he would have deceived us so! To think that he has been going about with Aunt Della and me, and we never suspected who he was. I feel so annoyed—so ashamed! Mr. Parker, will it be long before you expose him? Oh! how people will laugh and sneer if they come to hear of it? An impostor like that! and we believed in him and liked him so much!"

"It was most unfortunate you should have met, and this extraordinary state of things have come about, certainly," replied Mr. Parker; "but dry your eyes, my dear Miss Nella. We—we will not give up the battle—we will fight it out to the last."

"Then you think," cried Nella, raising her eyes to Mr. Parker's face, her tears ceasing suddenly, "that he will bring the matter into court—that he will persevere—insist? I thought you said it was quite unlikely—that you would soon dispose of his pretensions!"

Mr. Parker looked grave and embarrassed.

"So I did, Miss Nella," he said, "and so I believed when I said it; but I was mistaken. This young man has much more to go upon than I dreamt possible!"

"What!" cried Nella, turning white. "Do you mean to say he is not an impostor, that he really is my cousin—grandfather's heir-at-law? and that I—"

"Gently, not so fast, Miss Nella!" rejoined Mr. Parker. "I do not say so for a moment—it will take a long time to prove that—but I will not conceal from you," and the bewildered look so unusual to them came again into Mr. Parker's eyes, that I have heard some strange things from Mr. Rogers, and his adviser, Mr. Howard, and seen some letters and documents which have astonished me. The thing of course is—are they genuine? I doubt it, but—"

"But if they are?" faltered Nella.

"If they are they certainly prove that your uncle Roger died leaving a son," replied Mr. Parker, gravely.

"And that he, Mr. Rogers, is my uncle's son?" asked Nella.

"No, he would still have to prove that—to prove his identity," answered Mr. Parker; "and though I have been much astonished at what I have heard and seen to-day, the young man may yet be only a clever deceiver, and—"

"You have doubts, I see you have," said Nella, anxiously. "Oh! Mr. Parker, supposing it were to turn out that I was the impos-

tor, not he! You seem no longer quite certain of my rights, I can see that. Are you?"

"I must make further inquiries before I can answer that question precisely," replied Mr. Parker, evasively. "Meanwhile," he added, more confidentially, "don't worry yourself. I've met with so many swindlers and impostors, Miss Nella, that I shan't be surprised if I have yet to include Mr. James Rogers amongst them. His story of being ignorant as to who you were all this time is almost incredible."

"I don't know," interposed Nella, uneasily; "I can't remember ever having mentioned grandpapa or Palliser Court to him, and, as he said, I really believe he has no acquaintances in England. Oh! the Aoringtons! They can tell us all about him! I shall go—oh, dear! they are in Denmark, I believe. Their daughter, who is married to our minister there, is ill, and they went over; but I will write."

"Sir Henry Aorington! yes, it seems he knows him," said Mr. Parker, thoughtfully, "he mentioned that."

"Did he? That looks as if he did not wish to hide his past," said Nella, ruefully. "Do you know, Mr. Parker, I have a presentiment, I am a little superstitious I must tell you—I feel sure, certain, I am going to lose the dear old Court, that I am not an heiress after all, but only Nella Danvers, a nobody with nothing."

And she began to laugh rather hysterically. "What will Roderick Lord Rossallyn say?" she went on. "Not that he will care for the loss of the money, for he is rich enough, even if I do lose my fortune; but—but—"

At the mention of Lord Rossallyn's name Mr. Parker looked pityingly at Nella.

"Have you seen Lord Rossallyn lately?" he asked, gravely.

"Not for—not very lately," returned Nella; "he has been away on business in Scotland" (a slight smile flitted across Mr. Parker's lips); "but I expect to see him at Brighton to-morrow, he will have reached London to-day."

Mr. Parker frowned.

"Yes, he is in town, I heard so," he said, gravely.

He knew Rossallyn well by reputation, and could not help the thought passing through his mind that it would be a mercy in disguise, the loss of her fortune, if it saved her from a marriage with such a man.

"Well," said Nella, presently rousing herself. "I must be going, Mr. Parker. I have detained you dreadfully, I fear, and my maid will think I am lost. You will let me know soon how things are going on, won't you? I shall be dreadfully—I am dreadfully anxious. I little thought when I came here what I was to learn, Mr. Parker. Dear me, how late it is! Good-bye! I shall only just have time to get to the station!"

Mr. Parker, spite of the length of time Nella had detained him, sat for some minutes longer, buried in deep thought, before he turned to his desk, and the piles of papers lying beside it.

He had not dared to show her how much he had been upset, and how very doubtful he now felt of what he had once been so certain—namely, that Roger Palliser had left a son.

Whether James Rogers was his son or not, he still felt very uncertain about; but, once or twice, whilst the young man had been speaking to him that morning, and during his animated conversation with Nella Danvers, his face had assumed such a striking resemblance to the face of Jasper Palliser's dead son, Roger, that Mr. Parker's heart had mis-given him sadly, and he had been forced to admit that were he Jasper Palliser's heir-at-law or not, he must certainly have the Palliser blood running in his veins.

"A thousand pities I never could induce Jasper Palliser to make a will," he said. "I knew trouble would come of it. He was as obstinate on that point as he was on many other minor ones; and now poor Miss Nella is suffering for it. I'm sorry—deeply sorry—"

for her, whichever way it turns out. The young fellow, too! I'm bound to allow that he doesn't look or speak like an impostor. I'm too old a hand, however, to be influenced by that."

CHAPTER X.

"HOLDING OUT THE OLIVE BRANCH."

ALL that night poor Jim Rogers scarcely closed his eyes; he thought and thought, and turned things over and over in his mind till he was weary and worn out.

His heart felt sore and heavy; he was grieved, humiliated, and indignant. He had done no wrong to anyone; yet he felt as if he were a ruffian and a thief.

He had deceived no one, yet was obliged to allow the improbability of his tale that he was unaware who Nella was.

He had been accused of going about the world under a feigned name; and yet, though Rogers was not his name, he had yet to prove his right to another, and he had not used it to conceal his identity, nor to throw dust into the eyes of others.

Nella's scorn and contempt had cut him to the heart, and her declaration that she looked on him as a fraud and an impostor had made the blood tingle in his veins with shame and indignation, and wounded his gentle, honest heart grievously.

To see the girl he loved so madly, filled with scorn and anger against him—both so little merited—to hear her hard, cruel taunts and biting sarcasms, had caused him exquisite pain; and the remembrance tortured him terribly as he lay tossing on his bed.

Nella—his beautiful, high-souled, gentle Nella—how harshly and unjustly she had judged him! And yet, could he be surprised at her words? Must she not regard him as her enemy? Had he not come to England for the purpose of claiming what she considered hers, and possessing himself of the wealth she had hitherto believed her own?

"Oh! why did I ever read those letters? Why did I ever come to England?" he groaned. "Why did the news of my grandfather's death ever reach me? What possessed me to take up that paper that announced it? I was happy enough in Queensland; the rough, wild life suited me. I had never known anything better, anything different; I had friends, and money enough for all I wanted. I wish I'd never read those letters, I wish I'd never come over here, never discovered—realised, rather—that my name was not really Rogers; never seen her sweet, cruel, scornful face."

And the young fellow groaned as he tossed to and fro sleepless on his pillow.

The whole of the next day he passed alone in his rooms, still buried in deep thought; then he seemed to take a resolution, his face cleared, a look of determination came into it. He sat down and wrote a letter, posted it, returned to his room with a relieved air, and after dinner went off to the theatre, looking a different creature, later on, returning to bed, and sleeping as well and calmly as if the interview with Nella had never taken place, and that nothing was troubling him nor weighing on his spirits.

He had indeed taken a resolution, and a very important one. He loved Nella, he knew he should never again love any woman as he loved her; his love was hopeless—or well-nigh hopeless. Naturally she resented his position, naturally she looked on him as a cheat.

Well, let that be, he could not help it; but one thing he could do—he could refrain from prosecuting his claim, he could go back to Australia, drop the whole of the business, and leave her in the enjoyment of her wealth and position.

He loved her, he could not bear to take from her all she cared for. What joy to him would be money or position, the possession of all the Palliser estates, or estates a hundred times

more valuable, if they were to be secured to him by the sacrifice of her well-being and happiness? No! he would go away—go back to Australia, and rid her of his presence and pretensions.

She would never believe, perhaps, that love for her had actuated this step, or that his right to their grandfather's property was indisputable; she might continue to think him a fraud and a deceiver to the end.

It might be so, but his heart would be at rest. He would have done her no injury, and would know that, whether she acknowledged it or not, she would owe all her future happiness to him!

He would not go, however, without telling her why he was doing this, without telling her he loved her. No, it was such a faint hope that it hardly deserved to be called a hope; but still, she should know the truth, and it—if she gave him the smallest reason to believe that she was ever likely to return his love, why, then the difficulty was overcome, everything was plain before them; but if she scorned him, refused to believe in his truth, his love, his disinterestedness, then he would bow his head to his cruel fate, and leave her and England for ever. Next morning he rose early, and started soon after breakfast for Brighton.

"I will see her and tell her all," he said to himself, "tell her the decision I have come to. She shall see how unjust, how cruel she has been. I feel certain that by this time she will herself feel she was cruel and hasty, and will be sorry. Perhaps she will acknowledge as much, and—and at any rate we shall part friends."

It was a lovely morning as Jim got out of the railway carriage at Brighton. The sea was calm and blue, and the promenade was crowded with gaily dressed people. Amongst them Jim perceived Lady Vane; but to his great satisfaction Nella was not with her; she was evidently at home, when he got to the house he should find her there.

The door of the house was open, and a trim maid-servant stood just within. She recognised Jim, who was a prime favourite with all his dependents, with a smile.

"Lady Vane was out," she said, "Miss Danvers is in the drawing-room. Should she go up and tell Miss Danvers he had come?"

"By no means," Jim said, and passing the girl, who smiled knowingly at his eagerness, he ran quickly upstairs to the well-known room.

Nella, like Jim Rogers, had paused a trying time since their meeting at Mr. Parker's. She was seriously disturbed and anxious about her position and affairs.

Was there really a doubt as to her right to the Palliser property? Was it possible Mr. Rogers, as he called himself, might really have a better claim to it than she had? Oh! it was terrible to think there was even a possibility it might be so, and that all she had for so long considered her own was another's, that the dear old Court, her home for so many years, belonged by right to a stranger, and that she might have to give it up, together with the large fortune she had believed her own. It would be a blow indeed, and, coming from the quarter it threatened to come from, it would be all the harder to bear.

For Nella now felt how much she had learnt to like and admire Jim Rogers, how brightly she had thought of him, how kindly disposed she had felt towards him, contrasting him even, at times, with Lord Rosallyn, much to the latter's disadvantage, and wishing, sadly, that Roderick were as open, and frank, and easy to understand as her Australian friend.

Frank, easy to understand. Ah! how little she had understood him, how greatly she had overrated him. And yet, though she was loth to acknowledge it to herself, she felt that she had been distinctly wrong in the way she had spoken to Jim Rogers at Mr. Parker's.

Her behaviour had been petulant and undignified, she should have commanded herself better; and even if he were really an

impostor—the impostor she tried to believe, but had begun to doubt—she should not have allowed her speech to be so bitter.

Perhaps, even though he might not be Mr. Palliser's grandson, he believed himself to be so; he might, after all, be acting straightforwardly and according to his lights, and she had had no right to accuse him of wilful deceit, of being an impostor. And if it should turn out that he were the real heir-at-law, how unjust and unbecoming her words had been.

"He was the last, the very last man I should have believed capable of a dishonest or dishonourable action," she thought. "He seemed so truthful, so generous, I liked him so. Yet Roderick, when I told him yesterday what had happened, seemed convinced he was an impostor, and—and everything that is bad. Poor Roderick! he seemed quite put out to think that I should have met him, and that that embarrassing scene should have taken place. Roderick is not easily roused, but he was quite angry last night, and angry, too, with Mr. Parker for having frightened me, as he said. He does not believe there is anything in those letters, or that Uncle Roger can have felt a son. I wonder when I shall hear from Mr. Parker again. Of course, after what has passed, we shall never set eyes on Mr. Rogers more."

She sighed as the thought passed through her mind, and Jim's face as she had last seen it, so full of pain and reproach, rose before her; then the sound of a well-remembered footstep fell on her ears, and with a start she looked up. Jim Rogers stood before her!

The blood rushed to her cheek as she met his imploring gaze.

"Miss Danvers," he said, "I suppose you are surprised to see me. I fear you may feel angry with me for intruding on you, but—but I have suffered so much. I have been so miserable since we parted in London, that I could not help coming down to Brighton to explain—to—to—"

"Really, Mr. Rogers, I do not see—I cannot imagine what you can have to explain to me," interrupted Nella, coldly, but not unkindly. "Our meeting at Mr. Parker's was a most disagreeable one—a most unfortunate occurrence; but it is over, and—and I really think it would have been wiser—better taste on your part to have avoided me for the future."

"That is just the point I want to speak about," cried Jim. "Miss Danvers, you were very unjust to me that afternoon, but—"

"You have told me that before," interrupted Nella, again. "As your friend said, Mr. Rogers, the law will be able to settle that point—"

"That is not what I mean; and perhaps the law may never be called upon to settle it," cried Jim. "I mean you were unjust to me when you said I pretended to be ignorant of who you were. Miss Danvers, I give you my word of honour, I was ignorant of it."

He looked at her so openly and truthfully that Nella's eyes fell, and she felt abashed.

"I suppose I am bound to believe you," she answered, slowly.

"Bound?" he replied, reproachfully, "can you not say more than that?"

"Well, I will say I do believe you, then, if you wish it, Mr. Rogers," she answered; "but really, is it a matter of much consequence what I think or believe about it?"

"To me it is of the greatest consequence," returned Jim. "You little know how much."

Nella raised her eyebrows a little sarcastically.

"Ah! do not look at me like that," he cried, impulsively. "You do not know how your scorn hurts me, and how I deserved it? Look at the matter calmly. Remember what Mr. Howard told you, and what you have just acknowledged—that I had no idea who had possession of the Palliser estates, and that I was in ignorance of who you were, and I think you will allow that, though you may look on me as an opponent, you have no right either to scorn or condemn me. I was in Australia

when I learnt of Mr. Palliser's death, and wot he was—my father's father. Then for the first time I became aware that the name I had always borne was not really mine. Having learnt my family history from papers belonging to my father, that then for the first time came into my possession. I started for England to prove my claim. Can you blame me for so doing? Did I do wrong? Did I do anything dishonourable—anything you might not have done yourself under similar circumstances? Tell me that."

Nella, whose colour had been coming and going during Jim's speech, cast down her eyes uneasily as he concluded.

"Allowing that you really believe all you say—that you really believe yourself to be Jasper Palliser's grandson, I do not know that there is anything wrong or dishonourable in what you have done?" she said, at last, slowly.

"And I do believe it," he said, firmly.

"If that is so," she added, in an unwilling sort of way, "I am sorry. I must beg your pardon for my hasty words the other day, Mr. Rogers. Yes, I ought not to have spoken as I did, but—but—"

"Thank you, Miss Danvers," cried Jim, joyfully. "I felt sure you could not really believe me to be what you said—a fraud—a cheat. I felt somehow—and he looked her in the face again with a happy light in his eyes—"that though you had known me for only a few weeks, you could not believe me guilty of such falsehood. I had been so happy in your society. We had become such friends, Miss Danvers,"—and he looked at her "entreatingly"—"do not let this unhappy discovery of the relation in which we stand to each other destroy our friendship. Believe me, there is nothing in the world I value so much as your good opinion—your regard. Nothing I would not give up to retain it."

Nella started, and smiled a little ironically. "I do not quite understand. You cannot mean—" she began.

"I tell you I would give up everything to win your regard," replied Jim, looking at her with eyes full of tender longing. "It has been like death to me to learn that you are the person who will suffer if I prosecute my claim with success—you, who I admire, who I esteem and love—"

"Stop, Mr. Rogers!" interposed Nella, a little haughtily, though her voice trembled; "do not say another word, I—"

"Ah! you think me audacious, presuming, impertinent perhaps, but I must tell you all," he cried, passionately. "How I love—adore—"

She rose pale and trembling.

"Hush! silence!" she said, in a low firm tone, "this is sheer madness! Mr. Rogers, surely you must at any rate be aware of my engagement to Lord Rosallyn!"

Jim Rogers started back as if he had been shot, and a look of horror spread over his face.

"Your engagement!—you are engaged, and to—to him?" he said, in tones of despair and dismay. "Heaven help you, then!"

"I am," she answered, haughtily, for something in his tone angered her, as well as his words.

Jim remained silent for a moment with his eyes fixed on her.

"That is true—really?" he said again, in a low, harsh voice.

"I assure you it is perfectly true. We are to be married in a very little while," she answered, proudly. "And now I think our interview had better end, Mr. Rogers, I little expected when it began that—"

"Engaged, and to Lord Rosallyn?" said Jim, as if he had not heard her last word. "Good heavens! how terrible!"

"Mr. Rogers!" she cried, firing up.

"Forgive me," she said, sadly, recovering herself; and turning away with a white, pained face, he hastened from the room.

As he passed down the stairs he met a tall fair man, whom he instantly recognised as

Lord Rossallyn; the man whose conversation he had overheard at Epsom, which had impressed him so painfully.

Nella was the girl—the young heiress she had talked about, and it was her engagement to him he had spoken of to his friend with such cynical frankness! Poor girl! and perhaps she loved him, and believed he loved her! How sad the awakening would one day be.

What could he do to help her, and show her the real character of the man she was about to give herself to?

"Who was your visitor, Nella? A very gloomy, truculent-looking sort of fellow," said Rossallyn, as he entered the room poor Jim had just quitted. "Looked as if he would have liked to knife me when we met on the stairs. When I that's the fellow, Rogers, or whatever his name may be, is it, of whom you spoke to me last night? What the deuce did he want here? Never saw a more ill-conditioned-looking beggar in my life. He'd better keep away from here, or—"

"I don't think he'll come here again," replied Nella, calmly, though the manner in which Lord Rossallyn spoke annoyed her. "I told him in fact that—that it was impossible our acquaintance could continue."

"Quite right; it should never have been begun," replied he. "It was foolish, injudicious of Lady Vane to have permitted his visits here. What did he say to you, my love?"

But, somehow, Nella could not bring herself to tell Lord Rossallyn of what had passed between herself and Jim. She put him off with an evasive reply, and then, as good luck would have it, Lady Vane came in accompanied by some friends, and the subject was dropped.

CHAPTER XI.

HIS OLD LOVE.

AFTER leaving Lady Vane's lodgings Jim Rogers hurried back to town as quickly as possible, and on arriving, drove off to Mr. Howard's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

That gentleman looked at him curiously as he shook hands with him.

"Well, my boy," he said, "still at large? Nobody's put you under restraint yet? The malady not sufficiently developed yet for that, I suppose they think. Let me look at you, Jim. Let me feel your pulse—let me—"

"Hush! shut up!" cried Jim, testily. "You got my letter, Howard?"

"I did. Were you sane when you wrote it? or, no, it was too early. You hadn't been dining, had you? Was it a joke, Jim, or—"

"It was no joke," answered Jim, seriously. "I meant every word I wrote when I wrote it."

"What! you seriously meant that you desired to withdraw your claim to the Palliser estates to destroy all the papers you brought me from Australia; to leave things just as they are—in the hands of your cousin, Miss Danvers—in fact, and to hide yourself for ever in the Queensland bush! You really meant all this? Then, my dear Jim, allow me to tell you that when you wrote that letter you were not really sane."

"I was," replied Jim, firmly. "However, since yesterday something has come to my knowledge, and—"

"Where is the letter, Howard?"

"Here it is. I have not yet recovered from the effects of its perusal; if you see anything strange about me, you may know what to attribute it to," he answered.

Jim took the letter he handed him, and tore it to pieces.

"I've changed my mind," he said to the astonished lawyer.

Howard glanced at him sharply.

"I'm delighted to hear it," he said. "It was only in an access of temporary insanity you wrote after all then."

"Insanity be hanged; Howard, I wrote in a perfectly sane and sober state," he answered. "However, as I said, something has come to my knowledge, and all my plans are changed."

He paused a moment, and gazed gloomily out of the dull dust-covered window. Howard watched him with twinkling eyes, in which lurked a certain tinge of suppressed amusement. Observing, however, how worn and troubled Jim Rogers looked his expression altered.

"And what have you decided to do?" he asked. "What has made you change your intention?"

"I mean to go on with the case, Howard, to win it, and as quickly as possible. Yesterday, for Miss Danvers's sake, and to save her from disappointment and unhappiness as I thought, I was willing—eager to drop my claim. To-day, to save her from far worse trouble and misery, I am determined to establish my identity, and to take the Palliser estates from her."

"Ah!" said Mr. Howard, gravely. "I think I have an idea. I think I understand—"

"Yes, you were right, Howard, when you warned me, that if I gave up the estate I might be giving it over, not to her, but to some one who would marry her for her money. I find that is just what I should be doing were I to carry out my intentions of yesterday, and I will not do it."

"No, of course not," said Mr. Howard, nodding gravely.

"Not but that if she had been engaged to a good fellow I wouldn't have done it, though," went on Jim. "It's not jealousy or—disappointment, it's not—please understand this; Howard—it's not for my own sake I am doing this. It's for her sake, to prevent her marrying—if I can prevent it—a mercenary, calculating, cold-hearted villain, who, I know, cares nothing for her, and has not scrupled to assert that he is making a virtue of necessity, and marrying her in order to avert his own ruin. No, I'd have given it all to her, and welcome, and have wished her joy of it, had I learnt that she was to marry a man worthy of her; but this fellow, this Rossallyn—"

"What! Lord Rossallyn!" cried Howard with a start; "is it he she is going to marry, poor girl?"

"She is engaged to him," groaned Jim, but—Howard, you see my object in this now, don't you? I want to save her. If I can establish my right to the Palliser property, my belief in Rossallyn will never marry her. He will cry off, and she will escape. It will be a disappointment to her, I suppose, but still better, far better than—"

"Better, a thousand times better!" cried Howard. "Why, I know all about Rossallyn, Jim; a worse lot than that fellow is not to be met with in London, no, nor in England. Who has charge of Miss Danvers? What, Lady Vane? a light-headed, foolish woman of fashion! Because Rossallyn can offer his wife a coronet, she thinks nothing more is needed. Oh! those women of the world, how wicked, how heartless they are, how they sell their daughters for rank and wealth! It is terrible to contemplate their doings, the mischief, and sorrow, and evil they are answerable for. You are right Jim, it will be far better for Miss Danvers to give up all rather than become the wife, the victim, of a man like Rossallyn."

"Then I am not mistaken in my estimate of him," cried Jim. "I felt the fellow must be a cowardly, cold-blooded hound, from the conversation I overheard between him and his friend."

And he related to Mr. Howard the particulars of the conversation he had overheard at Epsom between Rossallyn and Grant.

"Just what I should have expected," said Howard, when Jim had concluded. "You are right, Jim, we must do all we can to prevent this, and frustrate his designs. I had heard rumours of Rossallyn's approaching

marriage, and pitied the girl with all my heart; but I had no idea she was Miss Danvers."

"And shall we succeed, do you think?" asked Jim, anxiously.

"I'm pretty sure of it—yes—quite certain in fact," he answered. "Lord Rossallyn is a ruined man, deeply involved, as I happen to know, though the world is ignorant of it. I think without doubt we can put a stop to this most monstrous marriage. We must hurry though, Jim, and let the world know at once that a *cause célèbre* is likely to burst on it. A paragraph or two in the daily papers will frighten him to begin with. You'll see the day for the marriage will be postponed a bit—there will be a hitch—important business will call the bridegroom elect away, the wedding will be further postponed, and at length we shall read a paragraph in the *Post* and *Court Circular* to the effect that the marriage announced to take place between &c. and &c. has been broken off."

"And poor Miss Danvers?" sighed Jim.

"Miss Danvers will one day thank you heartily for what you are about to do—if she is a girl of sense, that is. It will speedily become plain to her that the noble Earl was anxious to possess her money, not herself, and she will be thankful for her escape. Unless Rossallyn can chance upon another easy-to-beguile heiress very quickly, his own ruin is certain—he will be a bankrupt, and serve him right. Is Miss Danvers very much attached to him, or is the marriage of Lady Vane's making?"

Jim raised his eyes to his friend's in surprise; such an aspect of the case had never struck him.

"I suppose she cares for him," he said, reluctantly.

"Suppose! Can't you tell?" said Howard. "You see, till yesterday I did not know of the engagement," replied Jim. "I've never seen them together. She never spoke of him; and certainly I did not imagine that—"

"Hush! Bet you Lady Vane made the match!" interrupted Mr. Howard. "Miss Danvers won't break her heart when she loses him; her pride will be hurt, and she will be disappointed at the loss of a coronet, and mortified at being thrown over, but that is all."

"I hope it may be," said Jim, sadly. "I went down to Brighton yesterday, Howard, you know, and—I was just going to tell her I had made up my mind to relinquish all claim to my grandfather's estates, when she told me of her engagement, and—so I came away."

"The best thing you could do, my dear fellow," answered Howard, looking at him keenly, and forming a pretty correct idea of what Jim had not told him of what had passed between him and his cousin. "And now that you are here, let us go into business matters a little, for I have a lot to talk to you about."

As Mr. Howard opined, the rumour that a claimant to the Palliser estates, with really something to go upon had appeared, disturbed Lord Rossallyn not a little—far more than he had let Nella perceive.

He had heard more of the matter through the man of business than anyone was aware of, and that gentleman had, much to his dismay, advised caution, and that the marriage should not take place, nor in any way be hurried on till all doubts were set at rest.

(To be continued.)

The largest umbrella in the world was recently made for a West African king. It is twenty-one feet in diameter, and is fixed to a staff of the same length.

The first canal in England is said to have been that cut between Peterborough and the sea, forty miles in length. It was constructed by Morton, the Bishop of Ely, during the reign of Henry VIII.

A WOMAN'S SIGNAL.

—0—

"No, Harry, I detest concealment, and I have determined to tell my uncle of our marriage. I am sorry that we made any secret of it at all, but it was my fault, dear, and all because I have such a morbid horror of anything in the shape of a scene—"

"And do you imagine you are going to get through without a scene?" interrupted Harry Cross.

Mrs. Lottie made a little grimace, which was rather becoming to her piquante, pretty face, and playfully pinched the strong arm she was leaning against.

"Of course there will be a scene, Harry; but somehow I think it won't affect me so much as it might have affected Lottie Vere. You've no idea what a courageous person Mrs. Harry Cross has become. Oh, what's that? Oh, Harry! save me—save me!"

And a wild, ear-piercing shriek suddenly broke from the pale lips of this courageous young person.

"In heaven's name, Lottie, my darling!" exclaimed her companion, almost as pale as herself, as he raised her in his stalwart arms.

As he did so, his terrified young-wife, struggling and shrieking, shook off a trailing vine which had twisted about her ankle as they paced to and fro, and then she began to laugh hysterically.

"Forgive me, dear—how I must have startled you!" she exclaimed, between tears and laughter. "I thought it was a snake. Now don't dare to laugh, Harry! I am not a coward; I am equal to almost any degree of courage; but I draw the line at reptiles."

Harry kissed her, still trembling from the fright she had given him, and then, in a most reluctant tone, said,—

"I must go now, sweetheart. My train will be ready in ten minutes, and I have never been a second behind time since the company employed me, and it must never be said that Harry Cross, married, is less punctual than Harry Cross, bachelor."

"No, indeed, dear, that would never do!" said the pretty bride of two weeks, as she released the arm she had been clinging to; "and since the strike, which isn't well over even yet, you can't be too particular. But I didn't know you smoked when on duty, Harry. Let me strike the match, dear; I like to light your cigar for you."

And taking the little silver match-case from his hand, she quickly struck the match and held the flame to the end of his cigar till it was well lighted.

"I never smoke when on duty," he said, then. "It would be quite against rules; but I shall have finished my cigar before the train starts, and I think it quiet and steadies me for the journey. Good-bye, sweet girl—I haven't a second to spare now—good-bye!"

And with a hurried embrace, Harry fled away through the trees, down a hill, then across a level plain of a few hundred yards, and Lottie presently saw him reappear again on the platform of the station, where the locomotive he guided was already puffing and snorting.

"Dear fellow," she thought, turning away with a sigh. "All the courage leaves me the moment he goes. I'm afraid Uncle Phil will be awfully angry when I tell him of my marriage; but he would have been angry, anyway, and as I was determined to marry Harry, I might as well have a scene after as before, particularly as nothing now can part us. Why, if this isn't Harry's dear little match-box that I gave him at Christmas! I forgot to give it back to him. No matter, though, since he doesn't smoke on duty he won't want it, and the very thought of having something belonging to him gives me courage again. Now I will go down through Glyndon Gap, and I can get a glimpse of him once more as the train goes by. It is such a lonely

place, I would hardly have dared go alone if I hadn't Harry's box."

And with a loving touch to the little silver box, Lottie put it away safely in her pocket, and turned toward the Gap.

This was a railroad cutting through a heavy growth of trees, whose drooping foliage on either side of the track made a somewhat gloomy twilight even in broad daylight; and now that night was coming on, it seemed already to have fallen in that dark solitude.

But Lottie was not thinking of that, for she already heard the shriek of the locomotive as it left the station, and she could feel the tremor of the earth as the train came swiftly on, and a moment afterward the blazing eye of the headlight was in sight, and the next moment the train swept by into the gray of the gathering night.

Harry had seen her and kissed his hand to her, and then she was alone and tremblingly conscious of the gloom and solitude surrounding her.

She hastened along the footpath, being frightened almost into crying out, when she suddenly found herself face to face with a couple of grimy-looking roughs.

But as they touched their greasy caps respectively, with a civil "Good-evening, miss!" she concluded in the same moment they were railroad hands; and reassured by that thought, hastened onward, and in a brief while found herself, thankfully enough, in the village where she took a cab home to her uncle's house.

All the way home—a drive of about ten or twelve minutes, Lottie was putting into form the confession of her secret marriage, that she had determined without further delay to make to her uncle, who was also her guardian, and adopted father.

It was, therefore, with a feeling of decided disappointment that she learned on her arrival home that Mr. Vere, who was an official of the railroad company, had been called away by business at the other end of the line.

However, the first disappointment once over, she felt grateful to have the evil hour put off once more, because she would see her husband again the next day, and that would doubtless bring her renewed courage.

She had bought some exquisite white silk handkerchiefs as a birthday gift for Harry, and on these she was now engaged in working a monogram composed of "H. C." with the glossy strands of her own dark hair.

"I believe I have tired myself," she said, with a laugh, putting away the last handkerchief now completed and rubbing both hands over her throbbing temples. "How my head burns, and such a strange buzzing, almost like voices in my ear! Positively I can almost fancy I hear words—'Not to-night; to-morrow, when the down-train is due. That will be safer and more certain too.'"

Again and again these words said themselves over and over in her brain, like the memory of something once heard but quite forgotten, till of a sudden she started to her feet as if a shock of electricity had shot through her.

The down-train was due in half-an-hour, and her husband was bringing it. And in the same instant came the thought that she must have heard those words the evening before as she came through the Gap. Yes, she was now sure of it, though she had been so pre-occupied at the moment that they had no meaning for her.

But now, as if by a flash of light, she comprehended all. The two roughs she had met were doubtless a couple of discharged strikers, and their intention was to wreck and plunder the train.

In less time than it takes to tell it, Lottie was dressed and out on the highway and speeding towards the station.

But as she flew along her brain worked quickly; there would not now be time to reach the station, and no messenger could help her; for, after all she was only acting on

a suspicion, an intuition. She was soon close to the spot where she had last seen Harry.

Yes, she was in "The Gap," through which Harry's train must pass before it could reach the station; and as she suddenly tripped and almost fell in the sudden twilight obscurity, she knew that her worst fears were realised.

Twenty or thirty feet of the rails were torn from the track and piled in a heap at the one dangerous spot in the place—a deep ravine near the edge of the track, into which the wrecked train, coming at full speed, must inevitably fall when thrown from the track!

Lottie felt a tremor as of death pass over her, and she turned sick with terror and nervous apprehension.

Her slender hands were twisted together as she looked up and down the track. To reach the station was hopeless. She could hear far off the warning whistle of the approaching train.

She turned toward it, white, trembling; and then instantly her nerves were like steel, her brain became steady. She murmured, in a low, intense whisper,—

"Help me, oh, Heaven! If I cannot save him, I can die with him!"

And then she flew onward, up the track, toward the approaching train.

Two evil faces peered out from behind some brushwood, and their glaring eyes looked after her with hate and fury.

"She'll flag the train, an' all our plans be knocked. Why didn't you let me kill her?" muttered one of the wreckers.

"We'll have enough to answer for," returned the other, surlily. "What can a girl do? She has no flag, and they won't see her. She's dressed in white, and that don't mean danger."

"See her now! By the Lord, but she's plucky!"

And drawing his pistol, he took aim, and a bullet sung past Lottie's head, where she stood in the middle of the track, waving a blazing signal to the approaching train.

As she fled toward it she had quickly torn off her white muslin skirt, and from Harry's match-box, that still lay in her pocket all this time, she had struck a light. The skirt was soon a blazing torch—a strange but unmistakable signal of danger.

The train slowed rapidly—quicker, quicker—and as the charred and smoking remains of Lottie's pretty gown dropped on the track, she saw the train was motionless, and saw no more, for everything had turned dark, and she lay unconscious among the grass and fallen leaves of the roadside.

"My brave girl—my beautiful, brave girl! what can I do to show my sense of your heroic behaviour?" exclaimed Mr. Vere, with a trifle of his customary pomposity, but with all his genuine good feeling and affection for his adopted daughter.

Lottie lay among the silken cushions of the lounge where Harry had placed her, when they had recovered her from her swoon and brought her home.

"How much are you willing to do, uncle?" asked Lottie, regisnly, as she glanced from her guardian to her husband.

"Anything—anything!" exclaimed Mr. Vere, effusively.

"Well, in the first place, I must have a new gown," said Lottie; "and then I must transfer your gratitude to the real cause of my heroism," and she took Harry's hand in both of hers. "You see, dear uncle, my husband was on that train, and my heart drew me there just as naturally as the needle turns to the pole—"

"Your husband?" gasped Mr. Vere. "Am I to understand, sir—Ah, well, this is no time for anger! We have all been too near the brink for that, and so—well, I give you to each other, young people, since you have already taken each other, it seems!"

And Harry bent down and kissed his wife.

ONLY POWDER.

—o—

THE declining sun seemed to pause for one golden second on the edge of the sea, and Mrs. Ferris involuntarily put up her plump hand, dimpled in each of its five joints, to shield her eyes from the ribbon of flame which blazed along the waves.

"Isn't it a lovely sight?" said she. "And only to think that to-morrow we shall have to go back to those dismal streets."

Mrs. Ferris was cashier in a huge feather factory, a charming widow, who answered exactly to Byron's idea of "fat, fair and forty."

Her companion, a tall, slim girl, with rich brown hair, large hazel eyes and bewitchingly irregular features, smiled.

"We?" said she, with a slight accent of interrogation in her voice.

"Oh, I forgot!" cried Mrs. Ferris. "But really, Annie Holt, do you intend to give up all your prospects and bury yourself alive in this country place?"

"I've promised Fred!" quietly responded Annie.

"But he's nothing on earth but the keeper of a lighthouse!" pleaded Mrs. Ferris. "And only think of being shut up in that living tomb, half a mile out to sea."

"I shouldn't mind it at all, so long as Fred was there, too," demurely answered the girl.

"It will be awfully lonely!"

"With one's husband?"

"And you've been used to such a busy life in Rinton's shop!"

"It has been too busy," said Annie.

"And every one says old Rinton would marry you in a minute if you'd give him the least encouragement."

Annie elevated her pretty little nose.

"I'd as soon marry the wooden Highlander in front of a tobacco shop," said she.

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Ferris, laughing. "Look here, Annie!"

In the plump, white hand she held out two or three cigars, brown-scaled and fragrant, and a box of matches.

"Speaking of tobacco shops," said she. "I snatched these away from Captain Bruce this morning."

"What for?"

"Because I think he's smoking too much. Because I've told him he must stop, and yet he still keeps on," declared the widow.

"Are you Captain Bruce's keeper?" laughingly demanded Annie.

"Well, no, not exactly, but—"

"Nesta!" cried Annie, seizing both her companion's hands and looking her resolutely in the face, "you are blushing! You are absolutely blushing!"

"No, I'm not!" cried Mrs. Ferris, looking pinker than ever. It's the reflection of that red sunset over the water. Why should I blush?"

"Because you like Ned Bruce. You know you do. Nesta! if only you would marry Ned, and then we need neither of us go back to town again! We could be so happy."

"What nonsense you are talking! He never has asked me!"

"But he would if you'd given him the slightest chance. And he has such a pretty cottage, and he owns a fifth of the vessel he commands."

"A sea captain is too much in the habit of commanding," observed Mrs. Ferris, solemnly. "He might want to command me! Oh, Annie, look there! We're not half a mile away from the old tower on Fairhope Point. Let's go and see what it's like. Come; it's our last night here."

"But Fred told me not to go to near it!" urged Annie.

Mrs. Ferris tossed her handsome blonde head.

"That's the very reason I mean to go," said she. "And Fred needn't know."

"Indeed, I'd rather not!"

"Just as you please," said Mrs. Ferris, rising from the rock upon which she had perched herself. "If you've got the conscience to desert me, do so. But I'm determined to see what's in the inside of that old ruin."

And unwillingly enough, Annie followed her friend across the glistening sand, fringed with ridges of still dripping seaweed, and dotted here and there with odd little convoluted shells.

"Don't, Nesta!" she argued. "It's growing dusk and the wind has turned cold." She shivered slightly as she spoke. "I'm sure there's a storm blowing up."

But Mrs. Ferris was in one of her merriest, most wilful moods. She caught Annie's hand and dragged her into the shadow of the solid-looking old tower.

She pushed the creaking door open and entered, still dragging her companion at her heels.

"A liquor storage, I think," said she, straining her eyes into the semi-darkness. "A lot of little barrels, laid on their sides! Now—do—wonder—what—they—are? Ah!" with a sudden inspiration, "wasn't it lucky I stole Ned's matches away?"

She drew the box of matches from her pocket with the quick motion which was habitual to her. In the same instant the dark doorway was again darkened—this time by a tall, masculine figure.

"Captain Bruce!"

Mrs. Ferris stood transfixed with amazement, the box in one hand, the upraised match, ready to strike against it, in the other.

Captain Bruce snatched both from her and thrust them deep into his pocket.

"Now go!" said he, in deep, stern accents.

Mrs. Ferris flushed to the very roots of her curly, gold brown bangs.

"I won't!" she cried. "You forget, Captain Bruce, that you are not on your own quarter deck! And anyhow," with a tone of defiant mischief in her voice, "I've got one match left in the bottom of my pocket!"

She was fumbling for it, when the tall sea captain suddenly caught her up in his arms as if she had been an oversized wax doll, and, striding through the narrow doorway, carried her some dozen yards or so across the glistening beach, before he put her down.

"How dare you?" cried the widow, involuntarily putting up her hand to straighten out her rumpled tresses. "I never, never will forgive you!"

"But, Nesta—"

"Nor will I ever speak to you again!"

"Mrs. Ferris—"

But before he could get the words out, the pretty widow had once more seized Annie's wrist, and the two were vanishing into the grey folds of the twilight.

Neither of them spoke until they had reached the quiet, apple-tree shaded lane which led to the farmhouse where they had been boarding for a few weeks.

Then, as they paused to regain breath, Annie looked at her companion in surprise.

"Nesta," she exclaimed, "you are crying!"

"I—I can't help it!" sobbed Mrs. Ferris. "He looked at me so! He spoke so sternly!"

"Nesta, you love him!"

"No, I don't!" cried Mrs. Ferris, stamping her foot. "I hate him!"

And then she sat down among the daisies and sweet fern, and cried harder than ever, until the first sprinklings of a coming shower compelled her to accompany Annie into the house.

"I've got the match in my pocket still," she said, when she was bathing her eyes before tea. "I—I don't care now whether Captain Bruce smokes or not."

Just as they sat down to the table, a flash of blue lightning outblazed the lamp on the table—a crash of thunder shook the walls.

Mrs. Ferris gave a little shriek; she was nervous in thunderstorms.

"I hope the powder magazine won't be struck," said the farmer's wife, coming in with a plate of hot oakes. "Captain Bruce, he's jest had it filled full his last voyage, an' the company ain't going to send for it till next week."

"The—what?" said Mrs. Ferris.

"The powder magazine," explained the farmer's wife. "Don't you know—that old stone building out on Fairhope Point. Tain't possible you haven't noticed it?"

Mrs. Ferris and Annie Holt looked at each other. Both had grown very pale, but the good farmer's wife observed nothing.

"I guess it's safe enough," said she, as another peal sounded farther off. "The storm's going off east, thank goodness!"

In half an hour the rain was over, and the moon was shining brightly. Annie, who sat at the window, gave a little start.

"I think—there comes Fred Eyre," said she, "up the garden walk!"

"And I'm almost sure," whispered Mrs. Ferris, "Captain Bruce is with him."

Annie ran out to meet her lover. Mrs. Ferris sat still until Captain Bruce entered. Then she rose, and looked up into his face with pleading eyes.

He held out the fragrant brown cigars and the little match-box which had so nearly precipitated them all into eternity.

"Here they are, Nesta," he said; "I give them back to you. You didn't know, did you, that you were standing in a powder magazine when I took them from you so abruptly?"

"I didn't know then, Captain Bruce," she said, in a low voice. "I know it now. And it was your promptness and decision that saved my life—all of our lives."

"You will forgive me then?" he pleaded.

"Oh, Captain Bruce!"

"And you will speak to me again?"

Mrs. Ferris's head drooped.

"You are cruel!" she whispered.

"Cruel! I? And to you? Oh, Nesta—oh, my darling!"

When Mrs. Ferris went back to London, it was to buy her wedding gown. The business had to look out for a new cashier. She and Annie were to be lifelong neighbours after all.

"And he has promised me two things," said the bride-elect. "One is to leave off smoking; the other is never again to transport any cargo so dangerous as gunpowder."

"Men never do keep the mad promises they make before marriage," said Annie, laughing.

"I intend to see to that myself," said Mrs. Ferris, composedly.

SEALS, when baking, place one of their number on guard to give the alarm in case of danger. The signal is a quick clap of the flippers on a rock. Rabbits signal with their fore paws, and have regular signals and calls.

Few people realise the cost of stopping a train. Each stop of a minute costs the company an actual outlay of between ten and fifteen shillings, besides the extra strain on the machinery in starting up again.

The popular idea that salt applied to the eyes will cause smarting is wrong. People forget that tears are always salt. A very simple remedy for weak or inflamed eyes is to open and shut them several times in warm salt water. This, to have any effect, should be done several times a day.

For ages the common slang phrase, or its equivalent, "in the soup," has in one form or another been in use among the Germans. "He sits in the soup," is used to indicate the situation of a man in misfortune by his own fault; "he has made a nice soup for himself," is used to indicate a ludicrous or ridiculous position in which one is placed by himself; "he must eat his own soup," with other expressions of this kind, is still in common use throughout Germany.

FACETIE.

No man can tell what a day may bring forth—a sun umbrella or a pair of skates.

LIGHTNING never strikes twice in the same place. It isn't necessary.

ALWAYS ready to take a hand in conversation—deaf and dumb people.

Why is the auctioneer an accommodating man? He comes and goes at our bidding.

A YOUNG man, upon being joked on the slow growth of his beard, gave as an excuse that "heavy bodies move slowly."

Who is it that takes something from something and yet leaves everything as he found it? The photographer.

FIVE o'clock tea drinking has been called by one who does not like it an insult to luncheon and an outrage on dinner.

A WOMAN is never known to advertise for the return of stolen property "and no questions asked." She would ask questions or die.

VORPUSH (at the piano): "You like my refrain?" Harry: "Yes, Professor: the more you refrain the better I like it."

FATHER: "Why don't you start that open grate in the parlour?" Daughter (who has a lover): "Too glare is so unpleasant."

FIRST IRISHMAN: "Poor Finnegan has jist been drowned." Second Irishman: "He's a lucky bhoy. O' always thought he'd be hanged."

GREENLAND has no cats. How thankful the Greenlanders should be! Imagine cats in a country where the nights are six months long!

MILBRED: "And, oh, George, would you go through fire for me?" "Oh—well—er—of course, Milly; but I bar your dad for sicker."

"Let's go into this restaurant and get something to eat." "But I'm not hungry." "That's no matter; you will be before you get anything."

"Why do they call it leap year?" "Because it is a time that the women jump for joy, and the men ship out of sight as quickly as possible."

A PHILOSOPHER says: "Do a man a favour and he will love you for a week; at the end of that time he will hate you because you do not do him another."

"Be mine, Amanda, and you will be treated like an angel." Maiden: "Yes, I suppose so. Nothing to eat, and less to wear. No, I thank you."

LADY (engaging servant): "You seem to possess every necessary qualification. Have you a sweetheart?" Servant: "No, mum, but I could soon get one."

ROBINSON: "I say, Chawley, you seem in wonderful spirits." Chawley: "Yes; I'm warding off the influenza, you know. Stiff glass every half hour."

It has been remarked that prominence has its drawbacks. The drum-major doesn't see as much of the parade as the man on the curbstone. But he is in it.

"Do you know the nature of an oath, ma'am?" inquired the judge. "Well, I reckon I orto," was the reply; "my husband drives a canal boat."

"GRACIOUS! what are you buying a mourning dress for? Is someone in your family dead?" "Not yet; but my husband has been appointed a football umpire."

"Hold your tongue for a fool!" was the polite recommendation of an Irish husband. "Sure, then, you're going to spake yourself!" was the equally polite reply of the wife.

MANAGER (boastfully): "Our theatre has been newly fitted up; the curtain—in short, everything—is iron." Critic: "Yes, yes; everything except the performers, and they are wooden."

PAINTER: "Doctor, I should like to present this painting to some public institution. Now, which would you recommend?" Doctor: "The blind asylum."

PHYSICIAN (to convalescent patient): "My bill, sir, for attendance during your late illness." Patient (looking over the bill and turning white): "Great Scott, doctor! was I as sick as all that?"

"Wipe, why do you open that window? We only have ten degrees of heat in this room." "Yes, that's so; and in the open air it's four degrees. Now I'll let those in, and then it will be fourteen, and quite comfortable here."

A NAVAJO hunter spent three months looking for a grizzly bear, and the bear's relatives have spent three months looking for him. "They think he must have found the bear."

"WHEN a girl repudiates my affection," said Jack Spurred, "I always soothe my disordered nerves by writing a poem upon her." "Why," said his friend. "Because it is composing, of course."

A MUSICAL dictionary defines a shout to be an "unpleasant noise produced by overstraining the throat, for which great singers are well paid, and small children well punished."

TEACHER (consulting his watch): "Now scholars, as I have just a few minutes more to spare, I will answer any question that you may ask me." Small Boy (anxiously): "What time is it, sir?"

TOFFER: "Have a cigar, old boy. I'm afraid these are not very good. In fact, they may be worse than those I gave you last." Friend (in a burst of politeness): "Impossible, my dear boy, impossible."

Mrs. HUTCHINGS: "How are you getting on in the literary line, Mr. Danon?" "Oh, poorly enough. All my articles have been rejected." "Well, I shouldn't mind. Why, sometimes good articles are rejected."

SMITH was irascible, and when introduced to Jones said, with severity, "I do not wish to know you, sir." "Heavens!" exclaimed Jones, with extreme surprise, "how some men throw away their opportunities."

Mrs. O'HARA: "It is so great trouble O' me. Me husband has jist been sent to jail." Mrs. O'Toole: "Shure and it's nothing you have to complain av. Me husband gets out of jail next wake. Oshone! Oshone."

"Won't you please speak a little more plainly?" asked a man at one end of the wire for the fourth time. "If I only spoke as plainly as I feel like doing, I'm afraid I'd be cut off," shouted the man at the other end.

KITCHENMAID (to Irish valet, who has just returned from Italy with his master): "Tell me, Pat, what is the lava I hear the master talking so much about?" Irish Valet (facetiously): "Only a drop of the crater, Molly."

PROFESSOR in estimating the multitudes that have inhabited the earth we are obliged to consider, of course, both the quick and the dead. Student: "That classification would leave out the messenger boys altogether, wouldn't it?"

PORTLY DAME, with the aid of her maid, struggling into her last season's winter jacket. "Why, Jane, I really believe this thing has shrunk." "Yes, m'm; it is really wonderful how clothes do shrink at your time of life."

A YOUNG married woman said to her husband, a few days ago: "Dear John, I wish you would buy me that elegant set of diamonds we saw in the window of that jewellery store on Austin Avenue." "Well, dearest, you know that when you wish anything it is just the same to me as a positive order," replied John. "Yes, John; yes, oh, you are so good." "Your wishes are the same as orders, and you ought to know well enough that I will not be ordered about by anybody," replied the brute, calmly.

THE papers are full of prescriptions for the cure of hydrophobia. What we consider the best prescription of all has not yet been published. It is this:—Cold lead, one and one-third ounces. Directions: apply internally to the dog's head.

FULBHAM (addressing toward pretty girl with a dozen men talking to her): "Yes, she's deuced pretty and smart and rich, but there are some things about her I don't like." Tuxedo: "Indeed, what are they?" "A dozen men."

VISITOR: "Go to the proprietor, and tell him to make my bill out properly, and write 'omelette' with two 's's' and not one." Waiter (a few minutes later): "It's all right now, sir. Omelette, one shilling; two teas, two shillings."

FARK: "Cabby, what are you stopping outside a public-house for?" Cabby: "Bless yer, sir, I didn't stop. Me 'orse stopped of its own haecord. B's the tenderest-acted 'orse that bever was. E knows I'm that thirsty I kin 'ardly keep me mouth shut."

A GENTLEMAN who discovered that he was standing on a lady's train had the presence of mind to remark, "Though I may not have the power to draw an angel from the skies, I have pinned one to the earth." The lady excused him.

WILL TELEGRAPH.—A telegram, something after the following form, may soon be sent from Chicago: "J. H. So-and-So. Your son has just fallen from the top story of the Masonic Temple. Will telegram result as soon as he gets down."

LADY (engaging cook): "Why did you leave your last place?" Cook: "I couldn't stand the dreadful way the master and mistress used to quarrel, mum." "What did they quarrel about?" "The way the dinner was cooked, mum."

PROFESSOR WHACKEN: "Who helped you to do these sums?" Johnny Fizzlepop: "Nobody, sir." "What! Nobody! Now don't lie. Didn't your brother help you?" "No, he didn't help me; he did them all by himself."

HELEN: "What did papa say when you told him we wanted to get married?" Fred: "I wouldn't like to tell you; but if the recording angel took down the remarks verbatim he must be an expert stenographer."

MANAGRA: "I am greatly disappointed in your acting, sir. You have completely ruined my new play by your cold and wooden performance in the love scenes." Leading Man (angrily): "Then why in thunder do you have a leading lady who acts onions?"

DUKE: "Let me congratulate you, Din-widdie. Din-widdie: "What for?" "I hear that you are the happy father of twins." "It's a mistake, Duke; a great mistake." "What's a mistake, the twins?" "No; the 'happy father'."

Nor long ago in London a preacher faulged in this little bit of sarcasm over a small collection: "When I look at the congregation," said he, "I ask, Where are the poor, and when I look at the collection, I ask, Where are the rich?"

SHE: "It's useless to urge me to marry you. When I say no, I mean no." He: "Always?" She: "Invariably." He: "And can nothing ever change your determination when you once make up your mind?" She: "Absolutely nothing." He: "Well, I shouldn't care to marry a woman like that anyhow."

An old man was in the witness box, and was being cross-examined. "You say you are a doctor?" "Yes, sir; yes, sir." "What kind of doctor?" "I make liniments, sir; I make liniments." "What's your liniment good for?" "It's good to rub on the head to strengthen the mind." "What effect would it have if you were to rub some of it on my head?" "None at all, sir; none at all. We must have something to start with."

SOCIETY.

ABOUT the only women in the world who smug their arms in walking are Americans.

GREEN will play a leading part in all the spring's new fashions, and nothing looks so fresh and spring-like.

WALKING dresses are still made very simply, but with a simplicity that has been carefully studied and costs money.

AN alleged important discovery made is that gold bangles are not as becoming to the arm as silver.

JACKETS for spring wear are chiefly in three-quarter length although a few shorter ones are displayed.

TABLE-NAPKINS are now made to match the china of the different courses. The handles are china and beautifully painted.

SUPPERERS from neuralgia are warned by a medical writer not to drink tea, but to drink freely of coffee into which the juice of a lemon has been squeezed.

THE Prince and Princess Christian are going on a visit to Berlin to see how their daughter, Princess Aribert of Anhalt, is enjoying her new home.

EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH of Austria and the Queen Regent of Spain, it is stated, are easy of access to the humblest of their subjects.

IN the south-western islands of Japan the women are the labourers. Their hands are roughed and tanned with heavy work, while the men's are delicate and white.

ONE reason why the Duchess of Edinburgh dislikes staying for long at Doverport is the inefficiency of the accommodation, which does not at all square with the ideas of a princess who is accustomed to the magnificence of Russian palaces.

AS regards the Army position to be given to Prince George of Wales, we are informed Her Majesty has privately approved of His Royal Highness being styled the Duke of Kent, and no doubt he will shortly be gazetted a Colonel in the Army.

M. DE LESLERS, though in comparatively good bodily health, is so entangled in mind that he scarcely recognises his oldest friends, and is quite incapable of sustaining a conversation. Although weak, he is able, with the assistance of a servant, to get about his house, but his condition is regarded as extremely alarming.

IT is said that Prince George of Wales is to have £15,000 a year to support his new position. It would be quite reasonable if he were to have seen a greater proposition, as the vote for the Prince of Wales's children was £36,000 a year, so that the three Princes would still have £7,000 a year each—a more than ample sum.

ANY woman whose cheeks are pale and who won't rouge can have the prettiest glow in the world by sponging the cheeks daily with one teaspoonful of benzine in three ounces of rose water. It does not colour, but simply calls the blood to the cheeks naturally, and cannot possibly hurt the most delicate skin or complexion.

THERE are now in New York a number of capable women who for a consideration relieve the overburdened house-mistress of the care and trouble attendant upon spring cleaning. The contractors begin at the garret and guarantee to put everything in order to the last load of coal in the cellar. Under them work a corps of trained paint and window cleaners, with others whose sole business it is to wipe freestone ceilings and walls and brush and polish furniture. They are personally responsible, not only for the quality of their work, but the honesty of those they employ and breakages that may occur. Although they are an expensive luxury, these energetic young women receive liberal patronage.

STATISTICS.

ABOUT twenty thousand women in Great Britain and Ireland earn their living as hospital nurses.

NO less than two hundred thousand acres in Great Britain are cultivated as orchards and market gardens.

THE world consumes three-billion pounds of paper a year, and it is supplied by forty-five hundred paper mills.

CHINA has a population estimated at three hundred and fifty million, which is nearly equal to the entire population of Europe. The Chinese national debt is one of the smallest, amounting to only thirty-eight million five-hundred thousand dollars.

GEMS.

CHOOSE rather to be strong in soul than in body.

EVIL is most dangerous when it looks most like good.

HE is wise who never acts without reason and never against it.

THE utmost that severity can do is to make men hypocrites; it can never make them converts.

DO not wait for a change of outward circumstances, but take your outward circumstances as they are, and make the best of them.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

JELLIED APPLES.—Fill a quart bowl with thinly sliced apples in layers with sugar. Add one-half cup of water. Cover with a saucer, weighted, and bake slowly three hours. Let it stand until cold, then turn out, and eat with cream or boiled custard.

PABBIPS.—Those who like pabbips will no doubt appreciate them if cooked in the following manner: Grate the amount required on a rather coarse grater, and mix with beaten eggs, using eggs enough to make a stiff batter. Season with pepper and salt. Shape about the size of large oysters, and fry brown in hot grease.

TOFFEE.—Two pounds of sugar, three ounces of butter, one tea cup of water, some ginger or vanilla to flavour, quarter of a teaspoon cream of tartar. Put the sugar, water, cream of tartar, and flavouring in a saucepan, and let it boil without stirring for five minutes. Then add the butter and let it boil a little; put in water when it gets hard. Pour out on a buttered dish to harden. This may be made with a teaspoonful of cream instead of butter.

PRESERVED RHUBARB.—Six pounds of rhubarb, six pounds of sugar, one lemon. Cut the rhubarb in pieces one inch long. Wash it very well, and put it in a basin with the sugar in layers, and let it stand. Add the lemon rind very finely chopped up, and the juice of the lemon. Let all stand for three days, then pour all the sugar, which will be melted, in the jelly-pan and boil up, then add the rhubarb and boil forty minutes, not stirring much. Put in jars.

ORANGE MARMALADE.—Four pounds of bitter oranges, two lemons, pare the skins very thinly, and cut them up into chips; boil the chips for half-an-hour in two breakfast cups of water. Take off all the white skin of both lemons and oranges, and break them all up. Put the whole in a jelly-pan, with five breakfast cups of water, and boil gently half-an-hour. Pour all into a jelly-bag, and let it drip. Now, put all this liquid, the chips and the liquid they were boiled in, with five pounds of sugar, into the jelly-pan; let it boil quarter of an hour; skim, and put in pots.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Bank of England covers nearly three acres.

LONDON, in monetary value, is worth two and one-half times as much as Paris.

THE total cost of the Houses of Parliament was just upon £2,000,000 sterling.

IT is estimated that the cost to Russia of the famine and its consequences is five hundred million dollars.

EXPERIMENTS in London show the atmosphere that is about forty feet above the street to be the purest.

ACCORDING to physiologists, the human mouth is steadily and undeniably moving toward the left side of the face.

THE letter "I" in the Chinese language has one hundred and forty-five ways of being pronounced, and each pronunciation has a different meaning.

A DIARY begun more than three centuries ago by the Hekaka family of Japan has been kept up continuously by the various heads to whose charge it was committed, until the volumes now fill eight large chests.

WOMEN have in various continental cities done exceedingly well as photographers. In Copenhagen one woman photographer has for several years been favoured with very flattering commissions from the court, and in Stockholm another counts royalty among her patrons.

A CAMEL of the largest size has been known to drink from thirty to fifty gallons and then travel without water for twenty days. The water remains pure, and numerous instances are on record in which human life has been saved in the desert by killing a camel and using the water from its stomach.

THE following are given as national greetings: "How can you?" Swedish. "How do you fare?" Dutch. "How do you stand?" Italian. "Go with God, Senor!" Spanish. "How do you live?" Russian. "How do you perspire?" Egyptian. "How do you save yourself?" Polish. "How do you bid yourself?" German. "Thank God, how are you?" Arabian. "May thy shadow never grow less!" Persian. "How do you carry yourself?" French. "How do you do?" English and American. "Be under the guard of God!" the Ottomans. "How is your stomach? Have you eaten your rice?" Chinese.

SPRING fashions for dogs are just out in Paris. When Chéri or Moustache arises in the morning he wears a wrapper of fine white or blue flannel till he dons his walking garb—a soft-lined blanket of English cheviot, striped or spotted with white, and covered by a longish cloak gathered close at the throat. If the darling drives with his mistress in the afternoon he is gorgeous in fine cloth, plush, velvet or chamouis skin, according to choice, with collar of velvet or fur chosen to suit his complexion, and a row of gold or silver medals for ornament. When the mistress is "at home" her pet reclines on the softest of cushions, clad in velvet, with the family coat of arms on the collar, and pearl ornaments.

INTERESTING relics of old days are the gimmel rings, used both for marriage and betrothal. They were made of two or three movable hoops, one of which was worn by each of the lovers during the betrothal; but at the marriage the completed ring was united again, and served for a keeper or wedding-ring, the hoops being kept together by clasped hands, and sometimes attached to a heart. In the North of Europe the wedding-ring opened in the centre, so that there was room for the finger to enlarge with age; but in this case it was not of plain gold, but chased and engraved. No doubt the double and triple gimmel rings originated in the old idea of a betrothal couple dividing a coin, each keeping half.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JAPHETH.—There is no difference.

D. A. D.—A deed of gift must be drawn by a solicitor.

DIGBY.—A sentence runs from first day of assize.

G. E.—The *Great Eastern* was launched January 31, 1888.

STEADY READER.—It is illegal to open a hairdresser's shop on Sunday.

YORK.—Marriage with a niece, or wife's niece, is illegal.

BLAINE.—A girl comes of age, as a boy does, on the twenty-first birthday.

JUDITH.—The execution took place at Worcester, July 18, 1888.

L. B.—An agreement between master and servant is exempt from duty.

A LOVER OF DOGS.—For every dog kept a 7s. 6d. license must be taken out.

C. W.—Goods may be distrained for rent without a county court warrant.

PERPLEXITY.—If rent day is Saturday notice to leave must be given on Saturday.

GRANT.—The charge for copying a will is 6s. for each folio of ninety words.

SCHOOL GIRL.—The murder of Mr. B. Lige, in a railway train, was on July 9, 1864.

TRAVELLER.—There are probate registries at Bangor, Carmarthen, and St. Asaph.

SUBSCRIBER.—If the things were given unconditionally they cannot be legally reclaimed.

IN DISPUTE.—Lord Cardigan was not killed in the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

LOVER.—No music can be played in a public-house without a music license.

BRUNO.—The dog-tax was 12s. in 1867, 5s. onward to 1878, and 7s. 6d. since.

YOUNG READER.—We decline to give the meaning of words that may be found in any dictionary.

G. A. K.—The Trent, 180 miles long, rises in Staffordshire, in a spur of the Pennine chain.

PROSPERITY.—There are eighteen banks in Scotland and eight in Ireland that issue bank notes.

A JEREMY GIL.—The "freedom" of a city is now only an honorary distinction, and carries no privileges.

ANXIOUS.—It is frequently the case in a growing lad, and we don't see anything out of proportion for the age which we should conclude, from your letter, you to be.

E. A.—If you cannot cure yourself of stooping, no one else can do it for you. There are appliances sold for the purpose at all surgical instrument makers.

TORMENTED MOTHER.—A widow is not obliged to find a home for her son of full age if he is able to work for himself.

IGNORANT JIM.—Artesian wells were so named from having been long known and used in the province of Artois, in France.

A STRONG MIND.—The quotation (Butler's "Hudibras") is "He that complies against his will, is of the same opinion still."

MECHANIC.—An assistant who is leaving is bound to work up to the ordinary closing hour on the last day of his employment.

COCKDOO.—The eldest son has no more right to the furniture than has the youngest son or daughter. It must be equally divided.

S. W.—Staffordshire wills are deposited at the District Probate Office, Lichfield. The cost of a copy depends on the length.

LEO.—The usual charge for searching the church register of marriages is 1s. for each year, and 2s. 6d. for copy of the entry.

GUY.—The Early-closing Association was established in 1842, to abridge the hours of labour and to abolish Sunday trading.

ANGELONA.—Bashing is supposed to be produced by a kind of sympathy between several parts of the body, occasioned by the same nerve being extended to all.

DESPAIRING ANNE.—You may bring an action for restitution of conjugal rights, which would raise the question of custody of the child. Apply to a solicitor.

SUFFERING ONE.—You should consult your own medical man as to the choice of a further adviser. It is against our rule to give advice on such matters.

C. F. T.—You cannot remove "rockery work" from your garden on leaving, and if the swing is fixed into the ground you cannot remove that without the landlord's consent.

NONCONFORMIST.—"Banns of marriage" are not published in chapels; similar particulars are exhibited on a notice-board at the registrar's office. The fees are about the same as at church.

DECK JEWELS FILLER.—1. You seem perfectly capable of managing your own love affairs. We should not presume to advise you on the subject. 2. We are very much obliged to you for your correction, we had overlooked the fact.

OLIVIA.—When a gentleman joins a lady on the street, turning to walk with her, he is not obliged to escort her home. He can take his leave without any apology.

GRANVILLE.—For each £100 the Government, through the Post Office, will grant an immediate annuity of £11 9s. 8d. to a woman aged seventy. You may get full tables at any money-order office.

TED.—We have seen it stated that, next to the Bible, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has been printed in the greatest number of languages; but we have no means of testing the accuracy of the statement.

CONVALESCENT.—There are convalescent homes at Blyth, Cheltenham, Bournemouth, Weston-super-Mare, and other places, at which patients are taken at moderate fees, but usually the note of a subscriber is needed.

UNHAPPY MOTHER.—There are at least half-a-dozen hospitals for incurables in London, at some of which paying patients are admitted. You may find the full list under the head of "hospitals" in *Whitaker's Almanack*.

A YOUNG MOTHER.—Abundance of pure, fresh air should be supplied even on the coldest nights, and the youngest child may become accustomed to this, providing it has abundance of bed-covering and warm night-clothes. There is no danger from colds so great as the danger from unventilated rooms.

ASPIRING MAN.—The lot of the beginner in story-writing is not a happy one. A successful writer must have at least a spark of the quality called genius, and besides that, plenty of industry and courage. Many attempt to write, but nineteen-twentieths of them fall by the roadside before even one of their MSS. is printed.

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST.

Who would not haste to do some mighty thing,
If safe occasion gave it to his hand,
Knowing that, at its close, his name would ring,
Coupled with praises, through a grateful land?
Who would not hear with joy some great command,
Bidding him dare to earn a glorious name?
The task is easy that secures us fame.

But ah! how seldom comes the trumpet call
That stirs the pulse and fills the veins with flame,
When victory asks fierce effort, once for all,
And smiling fortune points a way to fame
Along some path of honour, free from blame.
To one, the call to do great deeds speaks loud,
To one, amid a vast unheeded crowd.

Far otherwise the common lot of man,
Our hourly toil but seeks the means to live;
Our dull monotonous labour knows no plan,
Save that which stern necessity doth give.
Our earnings fill an ever-leaking sieve;
Our task fulfilled, another still succeeds,
And brief neglect brings overgrowth of weeds.

What wonder, then, if snuff ring man repine,
And hopelessness gives way to mad despair?
Some murmur at, yes, curse the scheme divine
That placed them where the saws of fretting care
Across their brows a deepening channel wear.
For them, no spring-tide speaks of hope renewed,
But changeless wintry skies above them brood.

Oh, fools and blind! This world is not the goal,
But shapes us for a larger world unknown;
The vilest slave, that keeps a patient soul,
Shall yet rank higher than the sensual drone
Who seeks to please his worthless self alone.
If humbly toil be hardest, yet be sure,
He most shall merit who can most endure.

W. W. S.

H. N.—We should give preference to British Columbia over South Africa, not because we think an engineer is certain to find work there, but because we are certain he would not find it in South Africa, and would then have no other course open to him except to come home again, whereas at Columbia he is on the Great Continent, and bound to find something to do somewhere.

T. P. A.—The remains of Major Andre, who was hanged as a spy, were removed from Tappan, New York, in August, 1831. They are now interred in Westminster Abbey beneath a costly monument of marble. The removal was made by British officers detailed for the purpose. Tappan was the headquarters of the American army. Andre was hanged in the full uniform of his rank as major.

KIT.—The lands discovered by Columbus and other navigators were supposed to be Indies, and they were collectively so-called, the King of Spain assuming the title of King of the Indies. When the truth was known the distinctive term West Indies was applied to America, and that of East Indies to Asiatic India. In its most restrictive sense the West Indies mean the islands lying between North and South America.

VALENTINE.—People who know all about such things say that the only original saint Valentine was a bishop of great renown, and that all the boys and girls of his day thought him a fine fellow. For doing something contrary to the desires of Claudius, Emperor of Rome, he was beheaded in the year 270. His reputation for charity and the love of everything unobscured had won him so many friends that he was easily canonized. On his festival day it was the custom of sending little missives of love was instituted. It is said that even the birds took an idea into their little heads to go courting on that day and select mates.

WATERLOO.—Waterloo Bridge was designed by Lionel Bond, and built for a public company by John Rennie. It was commenced in 1811, and opened in June, 1817. The cost was nearly a million sterling. The entire length of the bridge is 2,456 feet. It crosses the river on nine semi-elliptic arches of 130 span each. The structure is of granite, and has Grecian-Doric columns between the piers.

TOOTS.—France had to pay Germany £300,000,000 as a war indemnity, the condition being that a German army should remain in France until the whole sum was paid over. The treaty under which this huge amount became payable was signed on 26th February, 1873, and the last instalment of the debt was handed to the German authorities on 3rd September, 1873; the army of occupation withdrew across the Rhine ten days later.

MIDDE.—The largest sailing ship in the world is said to be in the possession of France. Her name is the *France*. She is a vessel with five masts, on four of which square sail is carried. The length is three hundred and forty-four feet, with a beam of forty-nine feet. The cargo which the *France* could carry is no less than six thousand one hundred and fifty tons. The ship is built of steel her masts and yards belong of the same material.

BEAU.—The long hairs on the side of a cat's face are organs of touch. They are attached to a bed of fine glands under the skin, and each of these long hairs is connected with the nerve of the lip. The slightest contact of these whiskers with any surrounding object is thus felt most distinctly by the animal, although the hairs themselves are insensible. They stand out on each side of the lion as well as on the common cat. From point to point they are equal to the width of the animal's body.

CONSTANT ADMIRER.—The reason why the red sunset indicates a fine day to come is because the amount of vapour floating in the air refracts the beams of the sun, and more freely transmits the red rays of light than the coloured rays. It is the degree of moisture in the atmosphere which affects the refraction of the light; and when the red rays of evening are freely transmitted the amount of moisture does not approach the rain point, and therefore promises the following day to be fine.

A GREAT SUFFERER.—Nerves in the head proceed from so many and various causes that it is often difficult for a medical man to determine the cause. It is a very distressing complaint, affecting persons in weak health in various degrees. It is a mark of symptom of mental fatigue and anxiety, and is often diagnostic of some existing lesion or morbid irritability of the auditory nerve. It is also caused by defects in the circulation, an undue flow of blood to the head, and is apt to be produced by whatever increases the action of the heart.

TROUBLED ONE.—A great many men are troubled with pimples on the face, which are unsightly at best, and especially annoying when they come, as they often do, on the nose. Of course they arise from some impurity of the blood and need constitutional treatment, but until this is obtained a safe and easy way of preventing them is to apply arnica to the skin. A pimple never comes without warning; a few hours before there is always a slight inflammation or swelling, and if a drop of arnica be applied to the spot when the swelling begins, half a dozen applications in the course of a day will drive the pimple back under the skin.

NEARVOUS ONE.—The place where thunderstorms are most frequent is Java, which has an average of no fewer than 97 thundery days in the year. Next to Java comes Sumatra with 86, then Hindostan with 56, Borneo with 54, the Gold Coast with 52 and Rio Janeiro with 51. In Europe the list is headed by Italy with 38 days, Austria with 23, Baden, Wurtemberg and Hungary with 22, Silesia, Bavaria and Belgium with 21, Holland, Saxony and Brandenburg with 17 or 18, France, Austria and Silesia with 16, Britain and the Swiss Mountains 7, Norway with 4 and Carls with 3. In Eastern Turkistan and in the extreme northern parts of the world there are few or no thunderstorms.

ASTONISHED.—The Queen sometimes gives £3 to the mothers of three children at a birth, but only when the three infants all survive, and where the parents are respectable but too poor to meet the unforeseen demands of providing for them at once without some little assistance. Any such donation is simply an act of charity to those who are in poor and indigent circumstances. Much misapprehension exists respecting the origin of the Royal bounty of three guineas given to mothers who present their husbands with triplets. Some think it is a sum which can be exacted as a reward for increasing the population, and others—though they do not put it on so high a ground—are of opinion that it is a bounty to which every mother of triplets is entitled.

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